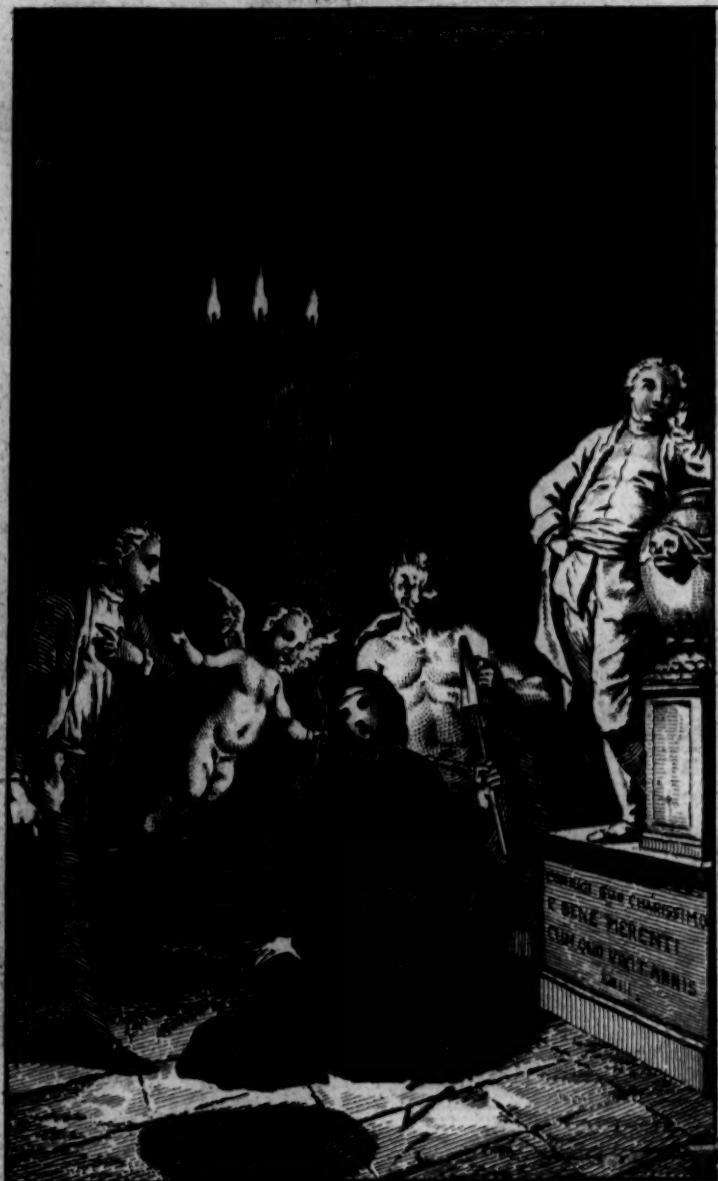


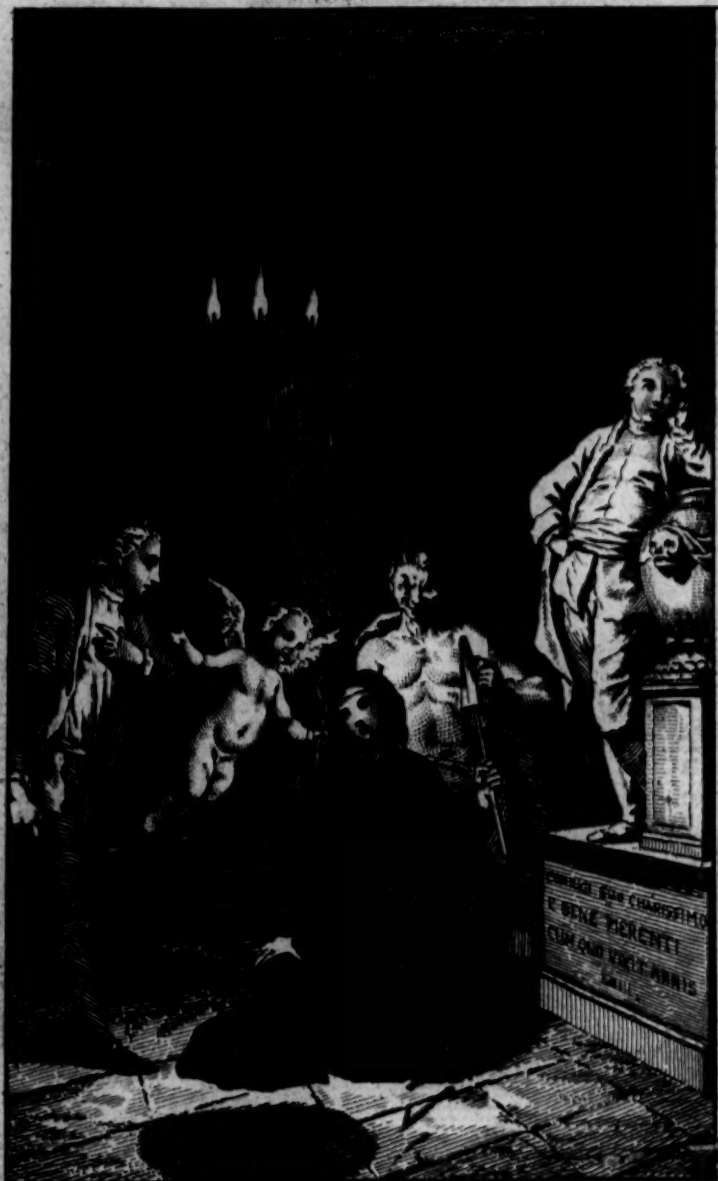


Ed. inv. d. Wale del.

C. Grignion sculp.

Ecce . . . sine luce facem!
Ergo assume novas . . . flammās.

Ovid.



Ed. inv. d. Wale del.

C. Grignion sculp.

Ecce . . . sine luce facem!
Ergo assume novas . . . flammās.

Ovid.

THE
MATRONS.

SIX SHORT HISTORIES.

A wall of BRASS, and one of LEAD,
Divide the living and the dead:
Repell'd by this, the gather'd rain
Of tears beats back to earth again;
In t'other the collected sound
Of groans, when once receiv'd, is drown'd.
'Tis therefore vain one hour to grieve
What time itself can ne'er retrieve:
Then quit this flame and take another;
DAME, I advise you like a brother.

PRIOR.

L O N D O N :

Printed for R. and J. DODSLEY, in Pall-mall.

M DCC LXII.

MATRONA

SIX SHORT LECTURES



1881

DEDICATION

TO
THE MATRONS
OF

Great Britain and Ireland.

LADIES,

BE not alarmed at this address; no rude commonplace invective is here intended: and though the following Stories may be thought to bear somewhat hard upon your
A Sex,

ii DEDICATION.

Sex, a moment's reflection will convince you that this miscellany is in effect a real panegyric; since to compile it (short as it is) we have been obliged to ransack the mouldy volumes of Antiquity, and to take a voyage as far as China.

The richest diamond-mine does not contain all true brilliants: why then should it be a discredit to your sex to have afforded a few instances of frailty and misconduct? The more we are disposed to blame the levity or wantonness of those Widows, whose weeds
are

DEDICATION. iii

are only a cloak for immodesty, or a lure for sollicitation, the more we must admire the virtue and prudence of every Lady, whose conduct has been the very reverse. The most virulent of your adversaries cannot deny but he sees most instances of the latter kind.

By this time we may venture to assure the Fair Reader, that this Publication proceeds not from the warm resentment of some disappointed lover, who being discarded by his SYLVIA would revenge his quarrel upon her whole sex; neither is it a discharge of

iv DEDICATION.

the accumulated spleen of some surly old bachelor, who would fain retort upon the Ladies those ill humours which have banished him from their converse: on the contrary, it comes from a sincere admirer of their elegant sex; from one who has its interest so much at heart, that he wishes no individual of it ever were to act amiss.

Having met with half a dozen pleasant stories on the same subject, the Editor has here thrown them together—with the primary intention of enlivening a dull or
vacant

DEDICATION. v

vacant hour—but not without the further moral view of deterring the Fair Reader from falling into that misconduct, which is here so pleasantly exposed to ridicule. She will here learn, that female Virtue never is so near its fall, as when it thinks itself secure; and that when it least appears in danger, then it most should be upon its guard: she will also learn, that when the heart is softened by grief, it is liable to yield to other impressions; and that one deviation from the straight road of virtue leads into a laby-

vi DEDICATION.

rinth of errors, whence it is hardly possible to return.

Such important lessons will the slightest novel suggest to the well-disposed mind. And that this small Collection may afford its Readers some other use besides that of mere amusement, that it may make them not only MERRY, but WISE, is the sincere wish of,

LADIES,

Your most devoted Servant,

THE EDITOR.

Thomas Percy.

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In Muliebrem levitatem ab autoribus
passim multa scribuntur. Fortasse
falso interdum finguntur plurima, ni-
hil tamen impedit ridentem dicere ve-
rum & fabulosis narrationibus, quas
philosophia non rejicit, exprimere quid
obesse possit in moribus.

JO. SARISBURIENSIS.

ERRATA:

Page 43. note, for opinions, read doctrines.

85. l. 6: for resolved, r. resolving.

116. l. 13. for to her, r. for her.

117. l. 11. for young husband, r. worthy youth.

126. l. 12. r. his own age.

THE
EPHESIAN MATRON.

From PETRONIUS.

B

THE

ER
7

THE
BRITISH MUSEUM



THE

THE
EPHESIAN MATRON.

From the Latin of PETRONIUS.

PETRONIUS's Introduction.

* * * * *

EUMOLPIUS, in order to keep up the spirit of the conversation, began to entertain us with little stories. His discourse turned chiefly upon the frailty of women; how soon they

B 2 forgot

forgot their most favoured lovers ;
 that there was no woman so modest
 or constant, as not to be hurried
 away by a new passion, even to the
 highest degree of extravagance. In
 confirmation of this, he said, he
 would not trouble us with the tra-
 gedies of antiquity, nor with stories
 well known to all the world, but
 would tell us an adventure which
 happened within his own memory,
 if we would but lend him our at-
 tention. Having by this preamble
 drawn all our eyes and ears upon
 him, he thus began.

The

The HISTORY.

THERE was at Ephesus a matron in such high repute for her chastity, that the women even of the neighbouring countries came out of curiosity to see her. This lady having lost her husband, was not content to attend the funeral, according to the custom of the country, with her hair dishevelled and to beat her breast before the people; she would needs follow the defunct into the sepulchre; and having laid him, according to the Grecian manner,

manner, in a vaulted dome, would watch the corpse herself, and weep over it night and day.

Thus resolved to give herself up to affliction, and even to die of hunger and neglect, the endeavours of her parents to dissuade her were fruitless, as were also those of all her other relations. Last of all, the magistrates themselves met with a repulse, and were obliged in the end to give her up. Every body bewailed this exemplary lady, as a dead person, for she had now languished four or five days without taking any food.

This unhappy widow was attended by a faithful and affectionate maid-servant, who mingled her tears with hers, and renewed the
light

light as often as it was burnt out. Her lady was now become the whole talk of the city ; and it was agreed by every body that she was a true, shining pattern of chastity and conjugal love.

It happened at this time that the governor of the province had ordered some robbers to be hung upon gibbets * near the same vault where the virtuous matron lamented over the body of her dear husband. Accordingly on the following night, the foldier, who was set to guard the gibbets lest any one should steal away the bodies and bury

* The original says, " hung upon crosses." This was the antient punishment.

them, perceived a light in the monument, and heard lamentations as from a person in affliction. From the common infirmity of human nature, he had a strong curiosity to know who it was, and what was the matter.

He descended therefore into the sepulchre, and, surprized at the sight of a very beautiful woman, stood staring as if he had seen a spectre. But when he had cast his eyes on the corpse, which lay stretched out before him, and had considered the tears and disfigured face of the lady, he at length imagined what was the case; that she was some poor afflicted person, who abandoned herself to despair for the loss of him who there lay dead.

Upon

Upon this he fetched his little supper into the monument, and began to exhort her not to persist longer in an useless sorrow, but to banish from her breast sighs and groans, which could nothing avail her nor the dead. He urged to her, that all mankind must make their departure in the same manner, and must all go to the same place; forgetting none of those arguments which are wont to heal the most afflicted minds. But she, the more irritated by a consolation so little expected or desired, redoubled her grief, beat her bosom with more violence, and scattered her hairs all over the breast of the deceased.

The soldier, notwithstanding this, was not discouraged; but with the
same

same persuasions endeavoured to prevail on her to take some refreshment; till the servant gained over, doubtless, by the smell of the wine, as much as by his arguments, accepted an invitation made to them both with so much humanity; and as soon as she had pretty heartily recruited her spirits with the wine and victuals, began herself to attack the obstinacy of her mistress.

And pray, madam, what good will it do, said she, to die of hunger; to bury yourself alive; and to surrender up your soul to fate before it is demanded?

‘ Think you the Dead, or clay-cold ashes care,
 ‘ What face of grief their sad survivors wear?’

What, would you raise the dead
 again

again to life in spite of fate ! Trust me, you had better lay aside a weakness of which none but a woman could be capable. Enjoy the blessing of light, while it will be allowed you : the corpse, which is here before your eyes, sufficiently shews the value of life, and should teach you to make a better use of it.

A person is never heard with indifference, who presses to eat on such occasions ; one easily suffers one's self to be persuaded to live. Thus the matron, tamed by her long abstinence, at length was prevailed on, and swallowed down the food with no less eagerness than her waiting-maid had done before her.

As

As to what followed, we all know that temptations usually succeed good eating and drinking. With the same soft and insinuating address with which the soldier had prevailed on the lady to live, with the very same he attacked her modesty. The chaste lady could not help thinking him a good handsome young fellow, and one that had a great deal to say for himself. Nor did the Abigail forget to perform all manner of good offices on this occasion ; often repeating,

And will you then resist love's dear delights,
Nor think how sweetly time or place invites ?

Not to detain you too long with my tale, the matron observed the
same

same abstinence with regard to her person, as she had before done as to her appetite; and the soldier obtained a complete victory over both.

They spent together not only this first wedding night, but all the next day, and even the day after. The doors of the tomb were so fast shut, that whoever had come to the monument, whether friend or stranger, would have had no kind of doubt, but that this pattern of virtue and conjugal affection, had expired upon the body of her deceased husband.

The soldier, charmed with the beauty of the lady, and with the secret of his good fortune, laid out all his pay in good cheer, and soon
as

As ever it was night brought it all into the monument. In the mean time the relations of one of the malefactors, finding that the guard was grown negligent, took down the body under cover of the night, and bestowed upon it funeral honours.

The poor soldier, thus overreached while he loitered away his time in pleasure, finding on the morrow one of the gibbets without a body, and grievously alarmed with the fear of punishment, went and told his mistress all that had happened; adding, that he was resolved not to wait for the sentence of a court-martial, but would do justice upon himself, and with the sword in his hands punish his negligence.

ligence. The only favour he begged of her was, to take care of his interment, and to commit his body to the tomb, fatal at once to her spouse and her gallant.

The lady was no less charitable than she was chaste. The gods forbid, said she, that I should behold at once the funerals of two persons so dear to me. I had rather hang up the dead, than destroy the living. In consequence of this prudent determination, she bade him drag her husband's corpse out of the coffin, and hang it upon the gibbet, whence the other body had been stolen.

The soldier profited by the ingenious advice of so discreet a counsellor; and the next day all the
people

people wondered how the corpse of
the gentleman deceased could find
its way up to the top of the
gibbet.

The lady was no less charitable
than she was chaste. The gods for-
bid, said she, that I should behold
repose the funerals of two persons
so dear to me. I had rather hang
up the dead, than destroy the liv-

ing. In consequence of this pro-
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drag her husband's corpse out of the
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The soldier profited by the im-
pious advice of his discreet coun-
sellor, and the next day all the

THE

people

THE
THE
CHINESE MATRON.
CHINESE MATRON.

From P. DU HALDE.
From P. DU HALDE.

C 2

THE

CHINESE MATRON.



T. H. E.

C. 2

THE
CHINESE MATRON.

From the French Version published by
P. DU HALDE.

The Chinese Author's Preface.

WEALTH and the advantages resulting from it, are like an agreeable dream of a few moments. Honour and reputation may be compared to a shining cloud, that is quickly blown away. The affection of the nearest relations

relations is frequently but a vain appearance. The most tender friendships are sometimes converted into the most deadly hatred. Let us not be fond of wearing a collar, because it is of gold; nor chains, because they are of diamond. Let our desires be reasonable and moderate: let us free ourselves from all attachment to sublunary creatures; they are a mere heap of sand, in which there is no stability. The great means to preserve our joy and liberty is to be independent of all other persons.

The sects of Tao and Fo, though very different from the sect of Confucius, agree with it in their sentiments of the grand duties of fathers, sons, and brothers; and have never attempted

attempted to weaken or oppose them. It is notwithstanding true, that the love of parents for their children ought not to make them too solicitous about settling them in the world; according to the proverb, "the fortune of children ought to be of their own making."

With regard to husband and wife, they are united by the closest and most solemn ties; yet divorce and death frequently dissolve them: this we learn from that old saying; "the husband and wife are like the birds of the field; in the evening they meet in the same grove, and separate in the morning." It must however be confessed, there is less reason to fear an excess in the affection between pa-

rents and children, than in conjugal love; the latter is cherished, and grows in secret by the close intimacy and mutual confidence of the wedded pair: it is not uncommon for a young wife to gain an intire ascendant over her husband; and this causes a son frequently to entertain a coldness for his father. These are glaring faults, which people of merit know how to avoid.

On this head I shall relate a passage in the life of the famous Chuang-tse.—But I protest, before I begin, that I have no intention to weaken the union that ought to subsist between the wedded pair: I would only shew, that we ought carefully to distinguish between true
and

and false merit in the disposal of our affection ; and as it is very dangerous to yield ourselves up to a blind fondness, so it is of great importance to our quiet to preserve in ourselves a due moderation : generally speaking, he who labours incessantly to conquer his passions, will at length subdue them : wisdom will be his portion, and a sweet and tranquil life the reward of his labours.

The

The HISTORY.

TOwards the end of the dynasty of Cheû appeared in China a celebrated philosopher named Chuang-tse ; he was born at a place in the kingdom of Song, where he had a small government : he became disciple of a sage very famous in those days, and author of the sect of Tao ; his name was Ly-eul ; but as he came into the world with white hairs he was called Lao-tse ; that is to say, “ the infant old man.”

As

As often as Chuang-tse closed his eyes, his sleep was interrupted by the following dream; he thought he was turned into a large butterfly, fluttering up and down, one while in an orchard, another while in a meadow. This dream made so strong an impression on his mind, that even, when he awoke, he thought he had wings fixed to his shoulders, and was ready to fly: he knew not what to think of a dream so frequent and so uncommon.

One day when his master Lao-tse had been discoursing upon one of the canonical books, he took the advantage of a moment's pause, and proposed to him the dream which so often took possession of his fancy.

Be

Be attentive, said this wonderful man, who was ignorant of none of the secrets of nature; the cause of this importunate dream is to be sought for in the times preceding those in which you live; know, that at the time when the chaos began to be reduced to order, and this universe was formed, you were then a beautiful white butterfly. The waters were the first production of heaven; the second were the trees and plants which embellished the earth; for the whole became fair and blooming in an instant. This charming butterfly wandered about at his ease, and enjoyed the fragrance of the most exquisite flowers; he knew even how to extract infinite pleasures from the sun
and

and moon; he procured to himself at length supplies of vigour which rendered him immortal; his wings were large and almost circular; his flight was rapid.

One day, as he was taking his diversion, he fixed himself upon the flowers of the garden of pleasure belonging to the great queen (into which he had found means to introduce himself) and spoilt some buds that were just beginning to open. The mysterious bird to whom the care of this garden had been intrusted, gave the butterfly a blow with his beak, of which he died.

The body of the butterfly became lifeless; but the soul, which was immortal, remained intire and unhurt: it hath passed into other bodies,

dies, and animates at present that of Chuang-tse. Hence you derive this happy disposition to become a great philosopher, capable of elevating yourself, of acquiring the doctrines I teach, of purifying your soul by an intire detachment, and of perfecting yourself in a thorough knowledge of the mind and heart.

From that time Lao-tse discovered to his disciple the profoundest mysteries of his doctrine; and the disciple found himself all of a sudden become another person: thenceforth, in conformity to his first original, he had in reality the inclination of a butterfly, which is to flutter about continually, without fixing on any object however charming: that is to say, Chuang-tse began to dis-

discover the emptiness of every thing which employs and captivates mens attention : the most splendid fortune was not capable of tempting him ; his heart became insensible to the greatest advantages ; he found them as devoid of solidity as the thin vapour which forms the clouds, and is the sport of winds ; and as unstable as the water of a brook whose course is extremely rapid. In fine, his soul no longer attached itself to any thing.

Lao-tse, seeing that his disciple had intirely disengaged himself from the amusements of the age, and had a relish for truth, let him into the mysteries of the Tao-te-king ; for the five thousand words of which that book is composed
are

are all mysterious : he no longer concealed any thing from such a disciple.

Chuang-tse, on his part, gave himself up intirely to study ; he read incessantly, he meditated, he put in practice the doctrine of his master, and by fathoming, purifying, and refining his interior, if I may so express myself, he perfectly comprehended the difference between what is visible and what is imperceptible in the human frame ; between the body, which is corruptible ; and the soul, which in quitting its fleshly abode acquires a new life by a kind of wonderful transformation.

Chuang-tse, struck with these lights, threw up the office which
he

he possessed ; he even took his leave of Lao-tse, and set out to travel, in hopes of making fine acquisitions of knowledge, and new discoveries of nature and truth.

But how ardently soever he thirsted after his favourite repose and disengagement of heart, he did not renounce the pleasures of matrimony ; he was successively married three times : his first wife was suddenly snatched away by a distemper ; the second he divorced for a breach of fidelity ; the third shall be the subject of this history.

She was called Tien, and was descended from the kings of Tsi*.

* One of the little kingdoms into which the Chinese empire was formerly divided : it is at present the province of Chan-si.

Chuang-tse had acquired a great reputation in this kingdom; and one of the heads of that family, taken with his merit, gave him his daughter in marriage.

This new wife far excelled the two former: she was well made; of a fine complexion for red and white; and to an amiable sweetness of temper had joined a great vivacity of wit: so that although the philosopher was not naturally a man of warm passions, he tenderly loved this last wife.

Though Chuang-tse had renounced business, the king of Tsû*, be-

* A small kingdom, at present the province of Hû-quang.

ing informed of his high reputation, took a resolution to draw him to his court; he deputed several of his Mandarines, with rich presents of gold and silk, to invite him to enter into his cabinet and take upon him the charge of prime minister.

Chuang-tse, far from being dazzled with these offers, returned for answer the following fable :

“ A young heifer designed for sacrifice, and delicately fed for a long time, marched in pomp, loaded with all the ornaments of a victim : In the middle of her triumph, she perceived, near the road, some oxen yoked, and sweating at the plow. The sight of these redoubled her pride ; but when she was brought into the

D 2

“ temple,

“ temple, and saw the knife lifted
 “ up to dispatch her, she would
 “ gladly have been in the place
 “ of those whose unhappy lot she
 “ had before despised.—Her wishes
 “ were fruitless, for she lost her
 “ life.” It was thus that Chuang-
 tse courteously refused the king’s
 presents and offers.

Soon after he retired with his
 wife into the kingdom of Song,
 which was his native country.
 He chose for his abode the de-
 lightful mountain Nan-hoa, in or-
 der to lead a philosophical life, and
 to taste, remote from noise and tu-
 mult, the innocent pleasures of the
 country.

One day as he walked forth,
 wrapt in thought, towards the foot
 of

of the mountain, he found himself insensibly got into the burying-place belonging to the neighbouring habitations. He was struck with their number. Alas! said he, sighing, here all are equal; here is no longer rank nor distinction; the most ignorant are here confounded with the wise: a sepulchre is at last the eternal abode of all mankind; when we have once taken up our lodging in this habitation of the dead, we shall never more return to life.

Having employed himself for some time in these melancholy reflections, he proceeded forwards along the burying-place, and before he was aware, found himself near a sepulchre newly erected. The little

mound made of tempered earth, was not yet quite dry. Near it was seated a young lady, whom at first he did not perceive. She was in deep mourning, that is to say, clad in a long white garment of coarse sack-cloth, without any seam. She sat close by the tomb, and held in her hand a white fan, with which she fanned incessantly the upper part of the sepulchre.

Chuang-tse was surprised at this adventure : May I take the liberty to ask you, said he, whose tomb this is, and why you give yourself so much trouble to fan it ? There is some mystery in this, which I cannot unravel. The young lady without getting up, as civility seemed

seemed to require, and continuing still to waft her fan, muttered a few words between her teeth, and shed tears, in such a manner as shewed she was rather hindered from explaining herself by some secret shame, than by the natural modesty of her sex on being thus accosted by a man.

At length she made him the following answer : You see a widow at the foot of her husband's grave ; death unfortunately hath snatched him from me : he, whose bones rest in this tomb, was dear to me while he lived ; he loved me with equal tenderness ; he knew not how to part from me when he died. His last words were as follows ; My dear spouse, said he, if hereafter you

should ever think of a second marriage, I conjure you to wait till the top of my tomb, which is to be of moist and tempered earth, is become quite dry ; I will then allow you to marry again. Wherefore reflecting that the surface of this earth, which is newly heaped up, will not soon dry of itself, I am continually fanning it to disperse the moisture.

At so frank a confession the philosopher could hardly keep his countenance. He nevertheless maintained his gravity. This woman, said he within himself, is in great haste ; how dares she boast of loving her husband, and of being beloved by him ? what would they have done, if they had hated each other ?

other ? Then addressing himself to her, You desire, said he, to have the top of the tomb quickly dry : but as you are of a delicate make, you will be soon tired, and your strength will fail you ; let me lend you assistance. Immediately the young lady got up, and making a deep courtsey *, accepted his offer, and gave him a fan like to her own.

Then Chuang-tse, who possessed the art of raising spirits, called them to his assistance. He struck the tomb three or four times with the fan, and the moisture disappeared. The young lady having thanked her benefactor with a gay

* The Chinese ladies perform their reverence by a courtsey, as in Europe.

and smiling countenance, drew from her hair a silver bodkin and presented it to him, together with the fan which she had been using; begging him to accept of this small present as a token of her gratitude. Chuang-tse refused the bodkin, but kept the fan: after which the lady retired, extremely well pleased; her joy appearing in her countenance and gesture.

As for Chuang-tse he remained quite astonished; and wholly taken up in reflecting on the strangeness of the adventure, returned to his house. Sitting down in his hall, where he thought himself alone, he looked for some time earnestly at the fan, and then repeated the following verses:

“ Would

“ Would not one be apt to say
 “ that two persons join themselves
 “ together out of some remains
 “ of hatred, which they bore to
 “ each other in their former
 “ life * ? And that they unite in
 “ marriage, in order to continue
 “ their animosities as long as possi-
 “ ble ? It is thus, I observe, that
 “ a man is unworthily forgotten
 “ after his death, by the person
 “ whom he had loved most dearly.
 “ How stupid then must he be to
 “ love during his life such an in-
 “ constant heart ? ”

The lady Tien stood, unper-
 ceived, behind her husband. When

* Alluding to the opinions of the Metem-
 psychosis or transmigration of souls.

she had heard the words above-mentioned, she advanced a little, and shewing herself, May one know, said she, what makes you sigh, and whence comes the fan which you hold in your hand? Chuang-tse related to her the history of the young widow, and all that had passed at the tomb of her husband.

He had scarce finished his story, but the lady Tien, with a countenance inflamed with indignation and choler, and as if the young widow had been before her eyes, loaded her with a thousand curses, calling her a shame to human nature and a disgrace to her sex. Then looking at Chuang-tse, I have said it, and it is true, that

that she is a monster of insensibility. Is it possible to find any where so bad a heart as hers?

Chuang-tse, without listening much to her words, but following the train of his own reflections, pronounced four verses to the following effect:

“ While a husband is living,
 “ what wife is there that doth not
 “ flatter and praise him? Is he
 “ dead; she is ready to snatch up
 “ the fan, to dry his tomb as soon
 “ as possible. A picture shews
 “ the outside of an animal; but
 “ it doth not shew what is within.
 “ We can view the countenance
 “ of a person, but not the heart.”

At these words Tien threw herself into a violent rage. Mankind, said she,

she, are all equal, as to their nature : it is virtue or vice that makes the difference. How can you have the boldness to talk in this manner in my presence ?—To condemn all women, and to confound unjustly those who have probity, with wretches that do not deserve to live ?—Are not you ashamed to pass judgment in so unjust a manner ? Are not you afraid to be punished for it ?

To what purpose so many exclamations ? replied the philosopher. Confess sincerely, if I should die this moment, and leave you behind in the flower of your age, thus beautiful and sprightly, could you bear to let five or even three years pass away, as the rites ordain, with-
out

out thinking of a second marriage ?

Is it not said, replied the lady, That a Mandarin, who is faithful to his prince, renounces all employments after the death of his lawful master ? That a virtuous widow never thinks of a second husband ? Was there ever known an instance of a lady of my rank, who having been once married hath passed into another family ; or hath quitted the nuptial bed after the death of her spouse ? If by misfortune I should be reduced to a state of widowhood, know that I should be incapable of such an action as would be a reproach to my sex ; and that a second marriage would never tempt me, I do not say during the term of
three

three or five years, but during life. No, such a thought could never enter into my head, even in a dream. This is my resolution, and nothing can shake it.

Such promises, replied Chuang-tse, are easily made, but not so easily kept. These words put the lady still more out of humour, and she broke out into words not very respectful: Know, said she, that a woman hath often a soul more noble and more steady in its affections than a man of your character. Can any one say that you are a perfect pattern of fidelity? Your first wife dies; soon after you take a second; this again you divorce; I in short am the third. You judge of others by yourself; and for this reason

son you judge ill. As for us women who are married to philosophers, and profess, like our husbands, to observe an austere virtue, we are much less at liberty to marry again : if we should do it, we should become just objects of derision. But wherefore all this language to me ? and why do you take a pleasure in giving me uneasiness ? You enjoy your health very well ; why then do you seek to give me disquiet, by making the melancholy supposition that you are dead, and that——

Then of a sudden seizing the fan, which her husband held in his hand, she snatched it from him, and out of mere spite tore it in pieces. Compose yourself, said Chuang-tse, your quick resentment gives me pleasure ;

E

I am

I am overjoyed to see you take fire on such an occasion. By degrees, the lady grew calm, and they changed their discourse.

A few days after Chuang-tse fell dangerously ill, and was quickly at the last extremity. The lady his spouse never quitted his bedside; she was bathed in tears, and sobbed continually. As far as I can perceive, said Chuang-tse, I shall not recover from this distemper; this evening or to-morrow I must bid you an eternal adieu: What pity that you have torn in pieces the fan which I brought; it would have served you to dry the bed of chalk and earth, which is to cover my tomb.

Ah!

Ah ! for goodness sake, Sir, cried the lady, in your present condition do not give way to suspicions so disturbing to yourself, and so injurious to me. I have studied our books; I know the rites; I have bestowed my heart once; it shall never be another's: this I swear to you; and if you doubt my sincerity, I consent, I even demand to die before you, that you may be fully persuaded of my faithful attachment.

It is enough, replied Chuang-tse; I am satisfied of your constancy. Alas ! I find I am expiring; my eyes will never behold you more. After these words he ceased to breathe, and remained without the least sign of life.

Then the lady, all in tears, and giving loud shrieks, embraced the corpse, and held it clasped in her arms a long time. She then cloathed it handsomely, and laid it in the coffin: she afterwards put herself into deep mourning. Day and night she made all the neighbourhood resound with her groans and lamentations, shewing all the signs of the most piercing grief. She even carried it to such excess, that one would have said she was distracted; she would take neither rest nor nourishment.

The inhabitants of both sides of the mountain came to pay their last respects to the defunct, whom they knew to be a sage of the first rank. When the company began to retire,
there

there arrived a young student, well-made and of a fine complexion. Nothing could be more gallant than his dress; he had on a robe of violet-coloured silk, and a student's cap exceeding neat; his girdle was embroidered, and his shoes extremely elegant and fine. This young lord gave them to understand that he also came from the kingdom of Tsfu. It is some years, said he, since I declared to the philosopher Chuang-tse a resolution I had taken up to become his disciple; I came here with this design, and I learn at my arrival that he is dead.—What a misfortune! what a loss!

Immediately he laid aside his coloured habit, and caused one of deep

E 3 mourning

mourning to be brought him : afterwards going up to the coffin, he hit the earth four times with his forehead, and cried out with a voice interrupted by sobs ; Wise and learned Chuang ! how unhappy is your disciple, that he could not find you alive, and profit at leisure by your lessons ! I will at least testify my regard and gratitude, by remaining here in mourning during the space of an hundred days.—After these words he prostrated himself four times on the earth, which he watered with his tears.

Afterwards he desired to pay his compliments to the lady ; who excused herself three or four times from appearing. Wang-tsun, (for that

that was the name of this young lord) represented, that according to the antient rites, a widow might suffer herself to be seen, when the friends of her deceased husband paid her a visit. I have still more reason, added he, to enjoy this privilege, since I was to have boarded with the learned Chuang-tse in quality of his disciple.

At these instances the lady suffered herself to be prevailed on; she came forth from the inner apartments, and with a slow pace advanced into the hall, to receive the compliments of condolance. These were made in a few words, and in general terms.

As soon as the lady saw the fine behaviour, the wit, and accomplishments of this young lord, she was charmed with them, and felt in her heart the emotions of an infant passion, of which she was not thoroughly sensible at first, only she wished that he was not to leave her so soon.

Wang-tsun prevented her wishes by saying, Since I have had the misfortune to lose my master, whose memory will be always dear to me, I should be glad to take some small lodging near, where I may reside during the hundred days of mourning, at the end of which I will assist at the funeral. I should also be very glad to read during that time the works of this illustrious philosopher;

they

they will supply the place of those lessons of which his death deprives me.

It will be an honour to our own house, replied the lady; and I see no sort of inconvenience in it. She accordingly prepared a small repast, and caused it to be served up.

At the same time she laid upon a very neat salver the compositions of Chuang-tse; to which she added the book Tao, a present from the famous Lao-tse; and came to offer them herself to Wang-tsun, who received them with his natural politeness.

On one side the hall, where the coffin stood, were two chambers which opened into the hall; these were appointed for the young lord to lodge

lodge in. The young widow came frequently into this hall to weep over her husband's coffin; and as she retired failed not to pay her compliments to Wang-tsun, who came out to salute her. In these frequent interviews many a glance escaped them, which betrayed the hearts of them both.

Wang-tsun was already half captivated, and the young widow completely so: what gave her pleasure was, that they were in a retired part of the country, and in a house little frequented, where any failure in the rites of mourning would be unobserved. But as it always costs a woman a good deal to make the first advances, she bethought herself of the following expedient. She

caused

caused secretly to be brought to her an old domestic that waited on the young lord : she made him drink several cups of wine ; she flattered and coaxed him : she afterwards by degrees brought in the question, whether his master was married : which he answered in the negative. Well, continued she, and what qualifications does he require in a wife ?

The servant, whom the wine had rendered gay, replied without hesitation, I have heard him declare, if he could but find one who resembled you, he should be at the very summit of his desires. This delicate matron instantly answered, Do not you tell me untruths ? Can you assure me that he spoke in this manner ?

manner? Can an old man like me, replied the other, be capable of telling lies; or have the front to impose on a person of your merit. Very well then, proceeded she, you are a proper person to bring about a marriage between me and your master; nor shall your labour be thrown away: speak of me to him; and if you find he approves of it, assure him that I shall esteem it a great happiness to become his bride.

There is no need of sounding him upon this article, said the valet, since he hath frankly confessed to me, that such a marriage would be intirely to his satisfaction: but he thought it not practicable, for as he was a disciple of the defunct, it would be censured by the world.

This

This objection is a mere trifle, replied the passionate widow ; your master was not really the disciple of Chuang-tse, he had only promised to become so, which is a very different thing : besides, as we live retired in the country, who is there can talk of our marriage ? Go, and should any other objection arise, you have address enough to remove it : I shall not fail to reward your services. At the same time she poured him out many cups of excellent wine to put him into the better humour.

He promised immediately to set about it ; but as he was going she called him back : Hark you, said she, if your lord accepts my offers, come immediately and bring me
the

the news, be it at whatever hour of the day or night ; for I shall expect you with impatience.

As soon as she had left him, she remained in extreme disquietude; she walked many times into the hall on diverse pretences ; but in reality it was to be near the young lord's chamber. By favour of the dark she listened at his window, flattering herself that they were talking over the affair which she had so much at heart.

Afterwards passing by the coffin, she heard a noise ; her heart misgave her. Ah ! said she in great emotion, what if the dead should be returning to life ! She hurried back to her chamber, and snatching up a lamp, went to see what
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occasioned the noise. She found the old domestic stretched out upon the table that was placed before the coffin for burning perfumes, and setting on offerings at certain hours. He was laid down to sleep himself sober, and to work off the fumes of the wine she had given him. Any other person would have raised an outcry on seeing this irreverence shewn to the dead; but she durst not complain, or even awake the drunken sot. She crept away to bed, but could not possibly sleep.

The next morning she met the old servant walking carelessly about, without ever thinking of giving her an answer. This coldness and silence quite disconcerted her :

her : she called him to her, and having brought him into her chamber, Well, said she, how goes on the affair, which I have entrusted to you ? I have done nothing in it, answered he drily. Ah ! why so ? replied she : you have doubtless forgot my offers to your master, or have not represented them in a favourable light. I have not forgot them, pursued the domestic ; my master is even inclined to accept them ; he thinks them advantageous, and is satisfied with your answer to the former objection. But he tells me he hath three others that are insurmountable, and which he is unwilling to disclose to you.

Let

Let me know, said the lady, what those three obstacles are. They are these, replied the old domestic, just as my master expressed them. In the first place, the coffin of the dead being still exposed in the hall forms a very melancholy appearance; and how in the midst of such a scene can we rejoice or celebrate a wedding-festival? Secondly, the illustrious Chuang having loved his wife so tenderly, and she having testified for him such a passionate fondness, founded on his great virtue and capacity; there is reason to fear that the heart of this lady will ever remain wedded to her first husband, especially when she shall find so little merit in her second. Thirdly and lastly, I have

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not here my equipage; I have neither money nor furniture; how then can I make the nuptial presents, or defray the expences? and in this solitary place of whom can I borrow? These, madam, are his objections.

If these be all, replied the enamoured widow, I shall instantly remove them. With respect to the first article; this dismal chest, what does it contain? A lifeless body; a corrupt carcase; from which there is nothing to hope, and nothing to fear. There is in a corner of my grounds an old ruined building; whither some of the neighbouring peasants shall remove the coffin, never more to be seen. Thus have

have we surmounted the first obstacle.

With regard to the second; To be sure, my husband was, as he would be thought to be, a man of rare virtue and capacity truly! Before he married me he had got rid of a second wife, which you will judge was good management. Upon the report of his reputation, which was ill founded enough, the last king of Tsfu sent him rich presents, and would have made him his prime minister. He who knew his own incapacity, and found it would be discovered in such an employment, betook himself to flight, and came here to hide him in this solitary place. It is not above a month since, walking forth

alone towards the foot of this mountain, he found a young widow fanning the upper part of her husband's tomb, because she was not to marry again till it was become quite dry. Chuang accosted her, and to ingratiate himself took the fan from her to dry the tomb with more expedition. He afterwards kept the fan as a token of her regard, and brought it hither ; but I snatched it from him and tore it to pieces. When he lay a dying, he brought this story again upon the carpet, which increased our disagreement. What kindness then have I received from him, or what regard hath he ever shewn me? Your master is young, is fond of study, and will infallibly become famous

famous for his learning: his birth renders him illustrious; he is, like myself, of royal blood; there is a wonderful conformity in our circumstances. It is heaven hath conducted him hither to unite us; and this is our destiny.

There only remains the third objection.—As to what regards the presents and expences of the wedding, I will take care to provide them. Can you think I have been so simple as not to have made a little hoard out of my savings? Here, take these twenty taëls*, and carry them to your master to buy new cloaths. Hasten to him, and

* In English money 6l. 13 s. 4 d.

tell him all I have said. If he gives his consent, I will go and make preparations for celebrating the marriage this very evening.

The servant took the twenty taëls, and related to his master all she had said, who at length gave the wished-for consent. When the lady received the agreeable news, she testified her joy a thousand ways. She immediately threw off her mourning habits; she dressed, adorned, and painted herself, whilst by her orders the coffin was conveyed into the old ruined building. The hall was immediately swept and cleaned for the nuptial ceremonies; at the same time a banquet was got ready, that nothing might be wanting on that joyful occasion.

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Towards evening they perfumed the nuptial bed with the most fragrant essences. The hall was lighted up with a great number of splendid lanthorns, finely illuminated. Upon a table at the bottom of the room stood the great nuptial taper of wax. When all was ready, Wang-tsun made his appearance, with a habit and ornaments on his head that very much added to the beauty of his person. The lady also came to meet him, dressed in a long robe of silk, richly embroidered. Then placing themselves beside each other, over against the nuptial taper, they made a charming appearance. Thus placed together, they mutually set off each other's persons; just as jewels and

pearls heighten the beauty of cloth of gold, and appear more brilliant themselves.

After making the usual reverences, and wishing each other all sorts of prosperity in their marriage, they walked hand in hand into the inner apartments: there they performed the grand ceremony of drinking alternately out of the cup of alliance. After this they sat down to table.

When the banquet was over, and they were upon the point of going to bed, the young bridegroom was suddenly seized with most horrible convulsions: his countenance was all disfigured; his eye-brows by turns opened and contracted; his mouth was hideously distorted: he
could

could not move a step; but trying to get upon the bed, fell to the floor: there he lay groveling, beating his breast with both his hands, and crying out as loud as he could, that he was sick to death with a pain at his heart.

The lady, desperately in love with her new spouse, without considering where she was, or her present situation, threw herself upon the body of Wang-tsun. She embraced him; rubbed his breast where the disorder lay, and asked him what was the nature of his complaint. Wang-tsun was too ill to make her any answer: he seemed to be at the point of death.

The old servant running in at the noise, took him up in his arms,
and

and shook him. Has my dear Wang-tsun, cried out the lady, ever had these fits before? Many times, replied the servant; there does not a year pass, but he is troubled with them; and it is only in the power of one medicine to relieve him. Tell me quickly, said the bride, what this medicine is? The physician of the royal family, continued the other, found out a secret that is infallible; which is, to take the brains of a man newly killed, and let him drink them in warm wine; then will his convulsions instantly cease, and he will recover. The first time that this disorder seized him, the king his relation ordered a man to be executed, who had deserved death, and they gave his

his brains to my master, who was cured, in an instant. But alas! where can we have the same remedy now?

But, said the lady, will not the brains of a man, who hath died a natural death, have the same effect? In case of absolute necessity, replied the old domestic, our physician told us we might use the brains of any dead person, provided he hath not been dead too long; because the brains only preserve their virtue so long as they continue moist.

Hah! cried the lady, we have nothing to do then but to open my husband's coffin, and to take thence this salutary medicine. I thought of it myself, replied the servant,
but

but durst not propose it, lest the bare mention should strike you with horror. Why so? answered she; is not Wang-tsun at present my husband? If there were occasion for my blood to cure him, I should not spare it; and shall I scruple to meddle with a vile carcass?

So saying, she left Wang-tsun in the arms of his servant; and snatching up a hatchet in one hand, and a lamp in the other, away she runs to the old ruined building, where the coffin stood. She tucks up her long sleeves, she grasps the hatchet in both her hands, and discharging a great blow on the lid of the coffin, cleaves it in two.

A woman's strength would not have been sufficient to break the boards, had they been of the usual thickness ; but Chuang-tse, through an excess of precaution and a great fondness for life, had ordered the lid of his coffin to be made very thin, because he had heard, that persons in some cases had returned to life after they had appeared to be quite dead.

The lid being thus split at the first blow, a few more intirely removed it. This done, she stopped a moment to take breath: at the same instant she heard somebody fetch a deep sigh ; and casting her eyes upon the coffin, she saw her husband move, and afterwards raise himself upon his seat.

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One may judge what was the surprize of the lady Tien. Terribly frightened, she gave a loud shriek ; her knees bent under her, and she was so confounded, that she let the hatchet fall out of her hand.

My dear spouse, said Chuang, help me to get up. As soon as he got out of the coffin, he took the lamp, and moved towards her apartment. The lady followed, but with a trembling pace, and sweating at every pore, because as she had left there young Wang-tsun and his servant, they would be the first objects to meet her husband's eyes.

When he entered the chamber, every thing appeared most gay and splendid; but happily for her, the bridegroom and his old valet had
left

left it. Upon this resuming a little courage, she considered how to patch up the affair as well as she could. Wherefore casting a tender look upon Chuang-tse ; Your poor little slave, said she, from the moment of your death hath done nothing but think of you day and night. At length having heard that a noise proceeded from the coffin, and calling to mind the many stories which are told of dead persons who have returned to life, I flattered myself with hopes that you might be of the number ; I therefore ran as fast as possible ; I opened the coffin ; and, thank heaven ! my hopes are answered. What a happiness for me to recover again so dear a husband, whose

whose loss I have never ceased to bewail!

I am obliged to you, said Chuang-tse, for such a tender regard; I have nevertheless one short question to ask you: Why are not you in mourning? How comes it that I see you dressed in a robe of embroidered brocade?

The answer was quickly ready: I went, said she, to open the coffin with a secret presage of my happiness; the joy that overwhelmed me did not require a gloomy dress; nor would it have been proper to receive you, full of life, in a habit of mourning: this made me put on my wedding-cloaths.

Very well, said Chuang-tse, let us pass over that article. Why was my

my coffin placed in that old ruined building, and not in the hall, where it ought to have been ? This question disconcerted the lady, and she could not answer it.

Chuang-tse, casting his eyes upon the dishes and cups, and all the other instruments of festivity, considered them attentively ; and without discovering his thoughts, ordered some warm wine to be brought him : he swallowed several cups without saying a word ; while the lady remained in great confusion. After which he took paper and pencil, and wrote the following verses :

“ Faithless spouse ! is this the re-
 “ turn you make for my tender-
 “ ness ? Should I consent to live
 “ with you, as a good husband
 G “ ought

“ ought to do with his wife, might
 “ not I fear that you would
 “ come a second time to cleave
 “ my coffin with the blows of a
 “ hatchet ?”

The good matron having read
 the verses, changed colour, and was
 so confounded she durst not open
 her mouth. Chuang-tse resumed
 his pencil, and wrote four verses
 more.

“ What have I gained by so
 “ many proofs of the most tender
 “ regard?--A stranger no sooner ap-
 “ pears, but I am instantly forgot-
 “ ten. They came to attack me
 “ in the coffin with great blows of
 “ a hatchet. This is a much more
 “ intemperate haste, than that of
 “ drying up the tomb with a fan.”

After

After this Chuang-tse said to the lady, Look at those two men that are behind you, pointing to them with his finger. She turned her head and perceived Wang-tsun and his old servant entering the house. This was a new cause of alarm for her. Looking behind her a second time, she found they had disappeared.

In fine, this unhappy woman, overwhelmed with despair at the discovery of her intrigue, and unable to survive the shame of it, withdrew into a retired corner, and untying her silk girdle, hanged herself upon a beam. A deplorable end, to which a shameful passion commonly conducts those who yield themselves up to it. As for her, she was really

dead without any hopes of returning to life.

Chuang-tse, having found her in this posture, cut her down, and patching up the broken coffin, without farther ceremony laid her in it. Then having a while diverted himself, by singing her funeral dirge in a burlesque manner to the sound of the dishes, pots, and other utensils, which had served for the marriage-feast, he burst into loud fits of laughter, and broke them all to pieces.

This done he set fire to the house, which being covered only with stubble, was in a short time reduced to ashes; and this was the funeral pile of the unhappy Tien, who was entirely consumed. Nothing was
saved

saved from the fire but the books of Tao-te, which the neighbours snatched up and preserved from the flames.

After this Chuang-tse, firmly resolved never to marry again, set out on his travels; in the course of which, meeting with his master Laotse, he spent the rest of his life, very agreeably in his company.

The Chinese author concludes the history with four verses to the following effect :

“ The celebrated OU, in a transport of jealousy, killed his wife--.
 “ This was brutality.

“ The illustrious SIUN almost died of grief when he lost his
 “ wife.—This was folly.

The

“ The philosopher CHUANG,
 “ who diverted himself by singing
 “ to the sound of the pots and glas-
 “ ses, and chose for his portion,
 “ liberty and joy—

“ He shall be my master, should
 “ ever such an accident happen to
 “ me.”

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THE
FRENCH MATRON.

By Sir G. ETHEREGE.

THE

THE
FRENCH MATRON

THE
FRENCH MATRON

FRENCH MATRON

BY SIR
J. R. C.



THE
FRENCH MATRON

THE
FRENCH MATRON

[22]

THE

FRENCH MATRON.

From a Letter of Sir G. ETHEREGE
to the Duke of BUCKINGHAM..

RATISBON, Oct. 2. 1689.

My LORD,

I NEVER enjoy myself so much,
as when I can steal a few mo-
ments from the hurry of public
business, to write to my friends in
England ; and as there is none to
whom

whom I pay a profounder respect than to your grace, wonder not if I afford myself the satisfaction of conversing with you by way of letters (the only relief I have left me to support your absence at this distance) as often as I can find an opportunity.

You may guess by my last, whether I do not pass my time very comfortably here; forced as I am by my character to spend the better part of my time in squabbling and deliberating with persons of beard and gravity, how to preserve the balance of Christendom, which would go well enough of itself, if the divines and ministers of princes would let it alone: And when I come home, spent and weary from the Diet, I
 have

have no Lord Dorsets, or Sir Charles Sedleys to sport away the evening with; no Madam J——, or my Lady A——'s; in short, none of those kind charming creatures London affords, in whose company I might make myself amends for so many hours murdered in impertinent debates; so that not to magnify my sufferings to your grace, they really want a greater stock of Christian patience to support them, than I can pretend to be master of.

I have been long enough in this town (one would think) to have made sufficient acquaintance with persons of both sexes, so as never to be at a loss how to pass the few vacant hours I can allow myself: But the terrible drinking that ac-
companies

companies all our visits, hinders me from conversing with the men so often as I would otherwise do; and the German ladies are so intolerably reserved and virtuous (with tears in my eyes I speak it to your grace) it is next to an impossibility to carry on an intrigue with them. A man hath so many scruples to conquer, and so many difficulties to surmount, before he can promise himself the least success, that for my part I have given over all pursuits of this nature. Besides, there is so universal a spirit of censoriousness reigns in this town, that a man and woman cannot be seen at ombre or piquet together, but it is immediately concluded some other game hath been played between them; and as this renders all man-

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ner of access to the ladies almost impracticable, for fear of exposing their reputation to the mercy of their ill-natured neighbours, so it makes an innocent piece of gallantry often pass for a criminal correspondence.

So that to deal freely with your grace, among so many noble and wealthy families as we have in this town, I can only pretend to be truly acquainted with one : The gentleman's name was Monsieur Hoffman, a frank, hearty, jolly companion ; his father, one of the most eminent wine-merchants of the city, left him a considerable fortune, which he improved by marrying a French jeweller's daughter of Lyons. To give you his character in short, he
was

was a sensible ingenious man, and had none of his country vices, which I impute to his having travelled abroad, and seen Italy, France, and England. His lady is a most accomplished person, and notwithstanding she is come into a place where so much formality and stiffness are practised, keeps up all the vivacity and air and good humour of France.

I had been happy in my acquaintance with this family for some months, when an ill-favoured accident robbed me of the greatest happiness I had hitherto enjoyed in Germany, the loss of which I can never sufficiently regret. Monsieur Hoffman, about three weeks ago, going to make merry with some friends,

friends, (at a village three leagues from this place) upon the Danube, by the unskilfulness or negligence of the waterman, the boat wherein he was, unfortunately overset, and of twenty persons not one escaped to bring home the news, but a boy that miraculously saved himself by holding fast to the rudder, and so by the rapidity of the current was cast upon the other shore.

I was sensibly afflicted at the destiny of my worthy friend, and so indeed were all that had the honour of knowing him; but his wife took on so extravagantly, that she, in a short time, was the only talk both of city and country; she refused to admit any visits from her nearest re-

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lations:

lations: her chamber, her anti-chamber, and pro-anti-chamber were hung with black; nay, the very candles, her fans, and tea-table wore the livery of grief. She refused all manner of sustenance, and was so averse to the thoughts of living, that she talked of nothing but death. In short, you may tell your ingenious friend Monsieur De Saint Evremont, that Petronius's Ephesian Matron, to whose story he has done so much justice in his noble translation, was only a type of our more obstinate, as well as more unhappy FRENCH WIDOW.

About a fortnight after this cruel loss (for I thought it would be labour lost to attack her grief in its first vehemence) I thought myself obliged,

obliged, in point of honour and gratitude to the memory of my deceased friend, to make her a small visit, and to condole her ladyship on this unhappy occasion: . And though I had been told that she had refused to see several persons, who had gone to wait on her with the same errand, yet I presumed so much upon the friendship her late husband had always expressed for me, not to mention the particular civilities I had received from herself, as to think I should be admitted to have a sight of her. Accordingly I went to her house, sent up my name, and word was immediately brought me that, if I pleased, I might go up to her.

When I came into the room I fancied myself in the territories of

H 2 death,

death, every thing looked so gloomy, so dismal, and so melancholy. There was a grave Lutheran minister with her, that omitted no arguments to bring her to a more composed and more christian disposition of mind. Madam, says he, you do not consider that by abandoning yourself thus to despair, you actually rebel against Providence, which is downright impiety. What would you say now, if heaven should punish it by some more exemplary visitation? That is impossible, replies the lady sighing; and since it hath robbed me of the only delight I had in this world, the only favour it can do me, is to level a thunderbolt at my head and put an end to all my sufferings. The parson finding her in this extravagant

travagant strain, and seeing no likelihood of persuading her to come to a better temper, got up from his seat and took his leave of her.

It came to my turn now to try whether I was not capable of comforting her; and being convinced, by so late an instance, that arguments brought from religion were not likely to work any extraordinary effects upon her, I resolved to attack her ladyship in a more sensible part, and to represent to her the great inconveniencies (not which her soul, but) her body received from this inordinate sorrow.

Madam, says I to her, next to my concern for your worthy husband's untimely death, I am grieved to see what an alteration the bemoaning

of his loss hath occasioned in you. These words raising her curiosity to know what this alteration was, I thus continued my discourse: In endeavouring, madam, to extinguish or at least to alleviate your grief, than which nothing can be more prejudicial to a beautiful woman, I intend a public benefit; for if the public is interested, as most certainly it is, in the preserving of a beautiful face, that man does the public no little service, who contributes most to its preservation.

This odd beginning operated so wonderfully upon her, that she desired me to leave this general road of compliments, and explain myself more particularly to her. Upon this (delivering myself with an unusual

usual air of gravity, which your grace knows I seldom carry about me in the company of ladies) I told her, that grief ruins the finest faces sooner than any thing whatever; and that as envy itself could not deny her face to be the most charming in the universe, so if she did not suffer herself to be comforted, she must soon expect to take her farewell of it. I confirmed this assertion, by telling her of one of the finest women we ever had in England, who did herself more injury in a fortnight's time by lamenting her only brother's death, than ten years could possibly have done; that I had heard an eminent Physician at Leyden say, that tears, having abundance of saline particles

in them, not only spoiled the complexion but hastened wrinkles. But, Madam, concluded I, why should I give myself the trouble to confirm this by foreign instances, and by the testimonies of our most knowing doctors, when, alas ! your own face so fully justifies the truth of what I have said to you ?

How ! replied our disconsolate widow with a sigh that came from the bottom of her heart ; and is it possible that my just concern for my dear husband hath wrought so cruel an effect upon me in such a short time ! With that she ordered her gentlewoman to bring the looking-glass to her ; and having surveyed herself a few minutes in it, she told me she was perfectly convinced that my
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notions were true. But, cries she, what would you have us poor women do in these cases? For something, continues she, we owe to the memory of the deceased, and something to the world, which expects at least the common appearance of grief from us.

By your leave, Madam, says I, all this is a mistake, and no better : you owe nothing to your husband, since he is dead and knows nothing of your lamentation ; besides, could you shed an ocean of tears upon his hearse, it would not do him the least service ; much less do you lie under any such obligation to the world, as to spoil a good face only to comply with its tyrannic customs. No, Madam, take care to preserve
your

your beauty, and then let the world say what it pleases, your ladyship may be revenged on the world whenever you see fit. I am resolved, answers she, to be intirely governed by you; therefore tell me frankly what sort of course you would have me steer. Why, Madam, says I, in the first place forget the defunct; and in order to bring that about, relieve nature, to which you have been so long unmerciful, with the most exquisite meats and the most generous wines. Upon condition you will sup with me, cries our afflicted lady, I will submit to your prescription.

But why should I trouble your grace with a narration of every particular? In short, we had a noble
regale

regale that evening in her bed-chamber, and our good widow pushed the glass so strenuously about, that her comforter (meaning myself) could hardly find the way to his coach.

To conclude this farce, which I am afraid now begins to be tedious to your grace, this phoenix of her sex, this pattern of conjugal fidelity, two mornings ago was married to a smooth-chin'd ensign of count Trautmandorf's regiment, that had not a farthing in the world but his pay to depend upon. I assisted at the ceremony, though I little imagined the lady would so soon have taken the matrimonial receipt.

I was

I was the easier perswaded to give your grace a large account of this tragi-comedy, not only because I wanted a better subject to entertain you with at this lazy conjuncture, but also to shew your grace, that not only Ephesus in ancient, and England in latter times, have afforded such fantastical widows, but even Germany itself; where if the ladies have not more virtue than those of their sex in other countries, yet they pretend at least a greater management of the outside of it.

* * * * *

I am, my LORD, &c.

THE

THE

BRITISH MATRON.

From a Manuscript, written
THE
WIDOW OF THE WOOD.
BRITISH MATRON.

By * * * *

BRITISH MUSEUM



THE
BRITISH MATRON.

From a Narrative, intituled,
THE WIDOW OF THE WOOD,
1755, 12mo.

INTRODUCTION.

IF the following tale should not
be told so agreeably, as some
of the others, at least it is
more strictly founded on truth.
The narrative from which it is ex-
tracted, is supported by authentic

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affi-

affidavits, and seems to have been drawn up by the person who is mentioned in the following pages under the name of VELIN. Although we have borrowed our materials from this gentleman, and generally given them in his own words, we have ventured to arrange them in a different manner: we have omitted many of the minuter circumstances; and instead of initial letters used by him, have chosen to give names intirely fictitious. A piece of decency, which we think due to the families and connection of the parties, who are persons of distinguished rank and probity.

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The HISTORY.

GENTLE reader, if thou hast ever travelled on the London road between * * * * and Chester, thou may'st possibly have observed a handsome new-built mansion, which we shall call from its possessor Wiley-house. This was lately inhabited by a beautiful young widow, whose remarkable adventures and enterprising genius have recommended her to a place in this small group of heroines, and

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might

might justly have intitled her to stand foremost on the list.

This lady was descended from a very worthy family of distinction in this island: she was of a middle stature; genteely formed; her complexion fair; her face oval; her hair of the true English colour, a pale brown; her eyes blue, large, languishing, and full of love.

Thus agreeable in her person, with the charming addition of twelve thousand pounds to her fortune, she had crouds of admirers; but the happy and favoured swain was John Wiley, Esq; at that time a student in the Temple, who in her twentieth year carried her off, and married her privately without the consent of her relations.

We

We shall not detain the reader with the connubial history of this happy pair. Let it suffice that he proved a man of honour, and made her a handsome settlement after marriage; which she returned by a still more valuable present of two fine boys. After living six years together (for ought we know) very happily, an epidemical small-pox snatched away this young husband, and left her a disconsolate widow.

Nothing happened uncommon during the first year of mourning; she went so many months dressed in black, and so many months cloathed in gray; and behaved in her weeds with great reserve and decorum. She upon all occasions professed a proper aversion for the fashionable

onable gaieties of the age ; declared her intention of devoting her life to privacy and retirement ; and put London to defiance with all its pomps and allurements.

Sentiments so just and so uncommon could not but meet with general approbation ; and seemed the more remarkable, as she was still but in her eight-and-twentieth year, and still qualified to shine amidst the young and the gay.

Among the visiting gentry, whose chariots sometimes drove up to her gate, was John Rover, Esq; a young gentleman of fortune, and member of parliament for the neighbouring borough. He was a single man, of good character, agreeable in his person, and lively in his conversation :

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in short, equally desirable as a companion for life, or for half an hour. In which of these views he was most considered by the lady we shall not decide; but his visits were observed to grow more frequent in their return, and longer in their continuance, than those of any other of her neighbours. This did not however cause any great speculation; much less could it occasion censure. The gentleman was of decent character; and the lady's reputation for reserve and prudence, was thoroughly established.

How any thing wrong could possibly happen between so well-behaved a man and so discreet a lady, we leave to the more discerning: matter of fact is our province, and we can

only relate, that after a few months the gentleman discontinued his visits, and the lady found herself pregnant.

Here, Ladies, was rather a disagreeable situation: a prospect of disgrace and misery, under the terrors of which many a gentle soul would have sunk: but our matron was luckily of another make, and the difficulties that threatened her, called forth powers, which few human minds appear possessed of. She wisely considered that a child born without a father, would make but a sorry figure in the world, and therefore resolved to procure him as good a one as she could. She had little hope of reclaiming the real father, and it behoved her to look out early for another. Let us observe how
notably

notably she managed upon this occasion, and without peeping behind the curtain, let us now see how she acted in public, before the eye of the world.

About half a mile from Wiley-house stands a venerable old hall, the seat of Sir William Worthy, Bart. This gentleman was about sixty years of age, but in vigour and spirits exceeded many a battered rake of five-and-thirty. He had lately buried his wife in London, and was come down into the country, that change of place and a new set of visitants might contribute to divert his melancholy, and enable him to bear a loss, which he could not retrieve.

Soon

Soon after his arrival at Worthy-hall, his two sons coming home from school, Mrs. Wiley sent her own little boys to pay them a visit. As these two families had not had the least intercourse for many years, and were not even on visiting terms, this unexpected advance surprized the baronet: but his surprize was not a little increased by a message, that soon followed, to invite the young gentlemen to return the visit: This was complied with.

And to shew the lady's growing regard, she sent a servant the same evening to desire leave to detain them to supper.

Not long after this incident, Sir William's brother, an Irish baronet, came with his lady to spend a few
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days at his house. An hour after their arrival a message came from Mrs. Wiley to inquire how her ladyship did after her journey; and to let her know she would have the pleasure of paying her respects to her on the morrow. Accordingly at the visiting hour she came, and behaved like an accomplished sprightly woman. When she was withdrawn, lady Worthy asked her brother, who this agreeable unexpected visitant was? She is my near neighbour, said he, a young widow: and this is the first time she has favoured this house with a visit for many years, which to be sure is on your ladyship's account. Is it so? replied she smiling: come, come Sir William, if I have any penetration,

tion, you are the occasion of these civilities.

Soon after his brother's departure Sir William received a visit from a very intimate friend, whom we shall call Mr. Velin. This gentleman came to Worthy-hall about the beginning of July 1752. Sir William entertained him with the above passages of our young matron, and her health was constantly drank at his table.

As sunday-evening is an established visiting time in the country, it soon came in turn to assemble at the widow's. Sir William proposed to his friend their going thither, and the chariot was ordered out accordingly. After the usual time spent among a set of formal faces,
the

the visiting ladies retired. The two gentlemen being thus left alone with the widow, after an hour's lively chat, rose in their turn to take their leaves; when she thus addressed herself to the baronet: "If you and your friend will stay and partake of a slight cold supper, I shall be glad of your company. You know I am lonely and it will be charity." As we readily consent to what is agreeable, the lady's request was soon granted, and the evening passed away very pleasantly.

A day or two after, Mr. Velin went to visit his old acquaintance the Rev. Mr. Coupler the curate of the parish. With this gentleman and his spouse (who were ever acceptable

ceptable guests at Worthy-hall) our blooming widow had lately commenced a most violent friendship. Seldom past a day but her chariot carried her to the parsonage, or fetched them to Wiley-house. During the above visit the doctor asked Mr. Velin, if his friend Sir William had any thoughts of marrying again? I think he has, replied the other, if he could meet with an agreeable woman suitable to his age and fortune. There is a lady, said Mr. Coupler, of a suitable fortune whom I am sure he may have, if you don't think her too young; and this you may tell Sir William from me. At the same time he named Mrs. Wiley.

Mr.

Mr. Velin at his return informed his friend of their conversation; who confessed that several persons in the neighbourhood had given him the same hints, and seemed as if they spoke from certainty.

Subsequent conversations, and a visit or two more to Wiley-house, led the baronet at last to conclude that he should be liable to reproach, if he did not put the necessary question to the expecting widow. The only objection was their disparity of age: but to this it was answered, that she was a lady of unquestionable virtue; and though so young, of an uncommon cast of mind: that she had intirely devoted herself to a rural life, and that, with all these considerations, vigorous
hale

hale threescore might stand no bad chance with cool flegmatic twenty-eight.

These difficulties surmounted, the wished-for question was put to the lady. The reader will easily conceive the joyful reply of the enraptured lover, when she conveyed her consent under the following agreeable objection— “ Indeed, Sir William, I “ think you may make a more desirable choice.”

Thus far every thing has succeeded to the widow ; we have seen with what dexterity she conducted her scheme, and might conclude her wishes would terminate with its success. To become lady Worthy and a reputable mother would have satisfied a woman of common genius,

nus, but our matron had more enlarged views. What they were we shall gradually discover.

The ensuing evening at the hour of eight Sir William repaired to his yielding widow. At this interview she not only consented to a **SPEEDY** wedding, but also insisted on its being performed with the utmost **SECRECY**.

When this was related to Mr. Velin, he was greatly alarmed at the thoughts of a **SUDDEN** and **SECRET** marriage; and therefore intreated his friend to obtain leave for him to visit his mistress, in order to discuss that important question. Sir William complied, and an interview was appointed.

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When Mr. Velin was admitted to the lady, he expressed how sensible he was of the honour done him in being permitted to advise her on the affair in question; but acknowledged himself greatly surprized at the account brought him by his friend, that she insisted on a speedy and secret wedding: as they were both persons of happy independent fortunes, it would be a kind of disgrace to enter into so important an alliance as it were by STEALTH. Let me prevail on you, Madam, continued he, to alter your design, and let me have the happiness of seeing your marriage solemnized, as it ought to be, publicly in the face of the world.

At

At this rational and close attack the lady seemed not a little confused—but recovering herself, she urged in her defence, that to make the marriage public would bring all her relations upon her, and particularly her brother, whose violent temper she had reason to dread. On this Mr. Velin asked how her brother was likely to behave when the marriage should be known. She replied smiling, “Why—“ he won’t be able to dissolve it: “Will he?” This remark, so agreeably conveyed, implied such an eager desire in the lady to have the marriage secure, that this advocate no longer insisted on the point; at the same time he begged leave to mention another; that it

was necessary she should sign a deed of release, to renounce all claim of power on Sir William's estate, in case she should survive him. He observed to her that she was possessed of many hundred pounds a year for her life, which at her death would revert to Mr. Wiley's sons; that Sir William had several children already, and was likely to have a new race, which must all be provided for out of his estate; and that therefore it was for her honour to sign so necessary a deed before the marriage.

To this she replied, You talk like a good friend of Sir William's; but if I had a proper advocate present, I doubt not but you would hear some powerful arguments urged in
my

my favour. But, Sir, I assure you, it is not my design to do the least injury to Sir William's family, and I will perform every thing needful to prove it.

Here followed some fine compliments on the lady's distinguished understanding. Then Mr. Velin told her he had only to add the most pleasing circumstance of all—the fixing the day of marriage, and to consider how it could be best effected upon her own plan: At the same time he recommended the Tuesday following, viz. the 25th day of August, being the first day of * * * * * races; which, he observed, would attract all the neighbours of condition, and draw off all the idle people. This

motion pleased the lady extremely. Mr. Coupler, added she, must send all his family to the races, and I will send my own man thither to prevent his making discoveries. And indeed she confirmed her fear of her servants by her extraordinary behaviour : for though they sat alone in a large parlour, and the doors were shut, she not only desired Mr. Velin to lower his voice, but rose very often softly to open the door that led to the back stairs, to see if any one listened, and said, She knew the curiosity of servants.

Mr. Velin at that time made no remarks on this circumstance, but having settled the preliminaries, imparted them to his friend the next morning. Sir William sent immediately

ately for Mr. Coupler, and let him into the secret. The good-natured divine, being a sincere well-wisher to both parties, very chearfully promised his best assistance. The same evening Sir William, his friend, and the lady met at the parsonage, and after tea and cards, when they were left alone, the doctor was desired to produce the licence, which was immediately filled up in the presence of the lady.

Nothing now remained, but for her to sign the deed before-mentioned: this was prepared the next day, and Mr. Velin intended to wait on her with it. But his intentions coming to the lady's ears, she dispatched the doctor, to desire Sir Wiliam would come to her that

evening without his friend. The latter smiled, and taking the paper out of his pocket, said, I understand the widow's meaning; she thinks she can deal with you better than me. Here, Sir, take the paper; and promise me now before this gentleman, that you will never marry her till she has signed it.—Sir William gave his solemn promise, and the same evening waited on the lady. She perused the paper with great dislike: she promised to think of it, but did not choose to sign the deed.

When Sir William informed his friend of her behaviour, they gave up all thoughts of celebrating the wedding on the day appointed.

When

When that day came, these gentlemen were amused in their morning and evening walks by seeing the widow wheeling round all sides of Worthy-hall in her coach alone; and going twice or thrice the same day to her good friends at the parsonage.

And here we must make a short digression.—We have before mentioned our matron's suspicious conduct with regard to her servants. She had in particular a footman, who was observed of late to treat his mistress with remarkable disrespect, and shewed by his behaviour that he was possessed of some dangerous secret. Once on a message to Sir William's house, he had declared among the servants that it was in
his

his power to bring his lady upon her knees, and had dropped other speeches of the like scandalous import. The servants, shocked at these strange expressions so injurious to the character of a lady whom their master respected, agreed to report them to their master's friend. This gentleman rightly judged that it would not be proper Sir William should marry a lady, who had been traduced by her own servant before persons who were soon to owe her duty as a mistress. He therefore laid the affair before Sir William and the doctor; who both agreed that it was paying but due respect to the lady to make her servant eat his words, or lay him open to her just resentment. Accord-
ingly

ingly he was sent for to Worthy-hall, and in the presence of the gentlemen confronted with his accusers: when he thought proper to sign a recantation and acknowledge himself a liar and a rascal.

This happened early on Wednesday morning, the day after that which had been fixed for the wedding. The same day happened a very remarkable incident, of so much importance to the matron's schemes, that we shall relate it with the most circumstantial minuteness.

Her great fondness for her two very good friends, Mr. and Mrs. Coupler, led her that morning alone to make them a visit; when she bitterly lamented her ill health, or rather her discontented mind. The
good-

good-natured Mrs. Coupler behaved like a true motherly woman on the occasion; and as eating and drinking are commonly prescribed, recommended chocolate and a glass of Madeira. She needed little persuasion to partake of both, but yet, fine-lady-like, still complained; and though her bed-chamber was the fittest place for such complaints, discovered little inclination of returning home. In short, she was easily prevailed on to send for her cloaths, and dress where she was, and so spend the day there. This was done with the hope that Sir William would accidentally step in: however that it might not be left to chance, it was proposed he should be sent for. He came accordingly in the evening,

evening, and the lady received him with complaints of her health, and of the treatment her servant had met with in the morning. These complainings, which were not a little vehement, threw her into the most violent hystERIC fit ever seen. This no doubt surprized the company, and all the usual nostrums were applied. While she continued in this fit, extended on a couch, supported by Sir William, her head reclining on his breast, she frequently cried out, “ Why don’t you send for Sir William?—Tell him I love him dearly!——I won’t injure his children!——That VELIN has undone me!——Oh! where is Sir William?”

The

The fit went off, as is usual in such cases, with a shower of tears. When the lady was recovered, the baronet expressed his desire to complete her happiness with his own, but observed to her that the delay was entirely of her own making.

When Sir William at night acquainted his friend with this surprising adventure, he expressed no small dislike at the lady's mysterious conduct; but gave it as his opinion that she would certainly sign the deed and marry him.

Mr. Velin's departure being fixed for the Saturday following*, he drew up a letter to be delivered to the lady after he was gone; wherein

*August 29.

he remonstrated to her in very plain, but respectful terms, the unreasonableness of her conduct.

“ I had promised myself the
 “ pleasure,” said he, “ of leaving
 “ you in an alliance that offered a
 “ prospect of sincere happiness to
 “ two worthy independent per-
 “ sons.

“ My friend’s conduct in this af-
 “ fair has been uniform and affec-
 “ tionate :——Your objections fill
 “ me with wonder and surprize.

“ I heartily wish I may never
 “ meet with a more difficult task,
 “ than that of convincing any rati-
 “ onal friend of yours, that it is
 “ for your own honour and felicity
 “ to sign the deed in question.

“ It

“ It is obvious, that Sir Wil-
 “ liam’s relations cannot possi-
 “ bly visit you on any other terms :
 “ nor can you receive the congra-
 “ tulations of the common friends
 “ of both families with a good
 “ grace, while you have it in
 “ your power to injure Sir Wil-
 “ liam’s children in so severe and
 “ unjust a manner : and my friend
 “ must be deemed a weak or
 “ worthless man to consent to it.
 “ How amiable must you appear
 “ in an alliance founded on mutual
 “ affection ? As you have both in-
 “ dependent fortunes, why should
 “ that best cement of your happi-
 “ ness be destroyed by any venal
 “ sordid views ?”

He

He concluded with a compliment to the lady's good sense, as " what he " did not doubt would direct her " to think and act properly in " this affair;" and then very respectfully bade her adieu.

At the same time that he left this letter with a servant to be carried as directed, he gave a copy of it sealed up to Sir William, with a request that it might not be read till he was gone. The reader will perceive that this gentleman thought he left his friend in some danger, and therefore as the parting stroke delivered his sentiments in the above plain and powerful manner.

The same evening Sir William received the following billet from Wiley-house.

L

" SIR,

“ S I R,
 “ I am obliged to go out this af-
 “ ternoon, but shall return home
 “ between seven and eight o'clock;
 “ if you are not engaged at that
 “ time I shall be extremely glad to
 “ see you. I was this morning
 “ favoured with a letter from Mr.
 “ Velin; I am sorry he should judge
 “ so hardly of one who in spite
 “ of him and all the world will
 “ ever be a sincere well-wisher to
 “ yourself and family.

“ I am, Sir,

“ Your most obliged

“ humble Servant,

“ A. WILEY.”

Sir

Sir William paid the requested visit, which was trifled away in ceremonious obliging speeches; for as the matron imagined that same cruel obstacle the DEED was a stroke of Mr. Velin's, she hoped, now that mischievous adviser was removed, that a few days employed in bewitching smiles, soft tender speeches, with now-and-then a melting kiss, would prevail with her lover to grant her better terms. In this scheme she engaged her very sincere flexible friend the Rev. Mr. Coupler; who out of respect to her late husband laboured to get the best terms he could for his widow. He accordingly took the first opportunity of applying to the baronet before

the lady, and much better terms he obtained for her. For though Sir William inflexibly persisted that the aforesaid DEED should be signed before marriage, yet she prevailed on him to sign another deed in her favour, drawn up by the doctor and dictated by herself.

In these successful negotiations ten or twelve days were employed, which brought on September 21st, N. S. and introduced a new person in the scene, which was Captain Worthy, a nephew of Sir William's, who came from his regiment to pay a short visit to his uncle. The very evening of his arrival he was introduced to the lady at her constant visiting-house the parsonage; where he was soon informed
by

by the eyes of the parties, and the behaviour of the company, that a wedding was near.

Accordingly on the 23d of Sept. as they were going to spend the afternoon at the widow's, they were surprized by the appearance of Mr. Coupler; who came to tell them that Mrs. Wiley had dined that day at his house and intended there to spend the evening; that she desired to see him and his nephew, and had made some whimsical signs that pointed towards an immediate marriage.

The gentlemen could not refuse so fair a challenge, and therefore went to the parsonage without delay. The good woman of the mansion had received her cue, and

L 3 presently

presently gave the word for promoting matrimony: no doubt the remembrance of her own happy time animated her not a little, for she was remarkably notable on the occasion. Sir William behaved on this sudden attack like a veteran soldier, and soon as he was informed of the lady's desire to be married that evening, was ready to answer in the words of ROWE,

Thou hast ta'en me somewhat unawares, 'tis true,
But love and war take turns like day and night,
And little preparation serves my turn;
Equal to both, and armed for either field,

In plain honest prose, he applied to their friend the parson to marry them instantly, and gave his honour to indemnify him for
neg-

neglecting to observe canonical hours : both of them promising at the same time to be re-married soon after in public.

This application the good-natured doctor could not withstand : he accordingly set about the necessary apparatus. Capt. Worthy was appointed to give the lady away, and the before-mentioned articles of marriage were carried to the church, which the parties entered at separate doors ; and there, after both the DEEDS were signed and properly witnessed, the MARRIAGE WAS CELEBRATED in all its forms.

Thus far our matron's schemes have proved successful : behold her safe landed in the harbour of matrimony ;

trimony ; behold her dignified with the title of Lady. She has also procured better terms for herself than she could equitably expect ; though her stickling for them so long has exposed her to the danger of invoking LUCINA before the due period ; but this affords her little disquiet ; a head so fruitful of expedients need not fear to find a salvo for that slight inconvenience.

What can she have to desire more ?—That she has yet farther views the reader of discernment will conclude from many circumstances of her mysterious conduct ; but especially from her labouring to have the marriage celebrated in so clandestine a manner, and at so suspicious an hour.—Not to keep the

the reader in suspense, we shall let him into the secret.

Be it known then, that our matron wisely considered that two strings to her bow were better than one; that a young lover was preferable to an old one; and though she had secured a good husband in case of the worst, that it would be yet most desirable to be the wife of her old friend Mr. Rover, provided he should hereafter relent; and therefore she resolved to preserve herself still in a state of capability of being his bride.

With this view, as soon as they had stolen with all possible privacy back to the parsonage, she began to renew her fears of a discovery, and again enjoined the company to be
se-

secret. But her suspicion was particularly levelled against poor Coupler; and not content with his solemn promise, was so unmannerly as to insist on his bible-oath. This, to shew her influence over him, and how much he was devoted to her service, he complied with. The good lady's grateful returns we shall be acquainted with very soon.

At the hour of departure she carried the bridegroom and the captain part of their way home in her coach. Nor did the former quit her without observing, how unusual it was for a bride and bridegroom to separate on the wedding-night.

The

The next morning it was generally reported all over the neighbourhood that Sir William and the young widow had been married the evening before. Two or three neighbours, who saw the parties about the church-yard, had had the confidence to pry into the secret. On this general rumour, which was propagated also by her own servants, several persons were sent by the bride, directly to examine poor Coupler on the truth of the report, and to push him on to a declaration,——because she knew she had fettered him to silence, and that his denials and evasions before so many witnesses would all serve the concerted plan, if she should ever find cause to put it in execution.

What

What a Machiavel in petticoats ! to be married in private ! few persons present ! to swear them to secrecy ! to propagate the report ! to send persons of some note to the parties to inquire into the truth of it ! that they might make oath when called upon, that Sir William and Mr. Coupler both denied a marriage on the 23d of Sept. This was a master-stroke in politics, and we shall soon find the great use she made of it.

Nothing material happened till the 27th instant; the interval being employed in mutual visitings and endearments: when the lady intreated Sir William to go somewhere on a visit for a few days from home, to remove all suspicion of their marriage: to which he like an obliging

husband consented. At taking his leave that night the lady burst into tears, and leaning her head on his neck continued weeping for some time. Sir William imagined her concern arose from the thoughts of their parting, and therefore told her with great simplicity, He had no business from home. To which she replied, You must go ; I'll make myself as easy as I can.

The next morning Sir William set out, and was absent from home four or five days. His return was sooner than the lady expected: for on sending a card to inform her of it, and of his intention to wait on her, she sent immediately for Mr. Coupler. When he came, she had the modesty to desire him to wait on
Sir

Sir William and let him know she would never live with him. We may conceive the astonishment of the honest doctor at this strange request. You amaze me, Madam, replied he : I hope you have done nothing to repent of. I would not carry such a message for the world ! Send for him and deliver it yourself. With these words he left her.

Soon after he was gone the bridegroom came ; and meeting her waiting-woman, inquired after her lady's health. To which she answered, Sir, my mistress is COMICAL ! What do you mean ? says he. Really, Sir, she replied, I don't well know, but my lady is very COMICAL ! She lay a-bed to-day,
 112 having

having had no rest all night: when she got up, I dressed her and she would lie on the bed again, and there she is. Sir William could get nothing more out of the Abigail, and therefore went up to the lady himself. He found her awake, but complaining of ill health; and, what was worse, she seemed to be in an ill humour. She took care however not to mention a word to him of what had past between her and Coupler; but, with seeming confusion, said, She would never go to Worthy-hall, while Mrs. Comfit the house-keeper was there, and one of the chamber-maids, she being informed he had too great an intimacy with the latter. The baronet

ronet was alarmed at this unexpected accusation, and expostulated with some warmth on her listening to such stories, which he said, were only raised by envious people to create an uneasiness between them.

His PROPER behaviour on this occasion seemed to soften the lady's resentment, who very soon began to smile and discover an inclination to a better subject. In short, Sir William began to consider, who he was, and WHERE he was; and might with great propriety have applied to himself the following stanza of a noble lord, who, I presume, was in the same situation, and where YIELDING was necessary:

Bring

Bring with thee, goddess, Graces three,
 With all the nymphs both frank and free,
 Of every feature lavish :
 Melting and yielding let her be ;
 Consider I am sixty-three,
 And that's no age to ravish.

The lady after this pleasant incident, which is generally productive of peace and good humour, appeared to have altered her mind ; and for some days was agreeably employed in laying out schemes for her speedy removal to Worthy-hall.

The 12th of October was now arrived, when Sir William paid her a morning visit as usual ; it was then agreed between them, that he should set out in a few days for London to buy new cloaths and liveries ; and that during his absence she should

M

take

take the opportunity of reconciling her brothers and aunts to the marriage.

With this pleasing expectation he took his leave till the accustomed hour of return in the evening. Just as that hour approached he received a message from one Mr. Hang-up, an attorney, that if he was alone and disengaged, he would wait upon him on business. This message was sent from a neighbouring inn by which Sir William was to pass as he returned to his lady; he accordingly soon followed the messenger, intending to call in his way.

When he was shewn into the parlour, Hang-up told him, he was afraid he had brought an unwelcome message; for his business

was to inform him that at 4 o'clock that same afternoon, he had carried the lady, called the widow Wiley, to her husband John Rover, Esq; and that she had desired him to wait on Sir William to inform him of it, that he might give himself no farther trouble about her.

When Sir William had collected himself, and was able to speak properly, he said, He had never had the least intimation that Mr. Rover courted the widow, much less that she was his wife; he therefore insisted on knowing when, where, and by whom they were married; and asked, if he could not see the lady. Hang-up told him he was going back to the parties, and would return with Mr. Rover's answer

in the morning. The borough which that gentleman represented in parliament, and where he then resided, was but a few short miles from Worthy-hall; and this Hang-up was Mr. Rover's agent in the said borough.

The next morning he came to inform Sir William from his principal, that the latter was married to the lady in question on the 16th day of June last, in * * * * church by the Rev. Mr. Credule.

Sir William's first care was to inquire into the matter of fact: accordingly a messenger was soon dispatched to the aforesaid Reverend to search the register, and to have the licence and bond examined; from all which it appeared that

John

John Rover and his lady were married on the 16th day of June 1752.

And now, reader, I must take thee a little behind the curtain, and inform thee, that while our honest well-meaning baronet was persuaded to take the journey above-mentioned, our heroine was trying to reclaim her lost lover; and the fluctuations of her mind between hope and fear will account for the consequent oddities of her conduct. At length her remonstrances had the desired effect, and on the 9th of October he sent for her privately and married her in his chamber; after which she returned home for three days, and at the expiration of that time was carried back publickly to her new husband, as is before recited.

But how are we to account for the aforesaid date of June 16th?—In the following manner.—When Mr. Rover wedded the lady, he knew not that she had been married sixteen days before to Sir William: this was a secret she took care not to impart to him; yet, to save her honour, and knowing her condition, he prevailed with Mr. Credule to antedate the marriage, giving him a bond of a thousand pounds to indemnify him from any harm that might happen.

Thus far he was drawn aside by motives of humanity, and without any sinister views; but, alas! one false step leads to many, and he that once forsakes the path of rectitude, knows not when he shall be able

to

to return. When this gentleman was made acquainted with all the particulars of the lady's situation, he was drawn in to join with her in a scheme of cool deliberate mischief, which he would before have abhorred.

They were now to guard against the consequences of Sir William's resentment, who was preparing to prosecute the lady for bigamy. While they staid in the country *, they lived very private and retired, saw none but their most particular friends, and Mr. Hang-up the attorney was their privy-counsellor.

After

* When this couple made their first appearance at church there happened a pleasant incident: the 2d lesson for the day proved to be the
ivth

After some time spent in forming a plan for their future operations, they all privately set out for London ; whence we shall soon hear from them in thunder.

Sir

ivth chapter of St. John ; and was read by their own parson, Mr. Credule ; in which occurred the following passage :

“ Jesus said unto her, Go call thy husband
 “ and come hither. The woman answered
 “ and said, I have no husband : Jesus said unto
 “ her, Thou hast well said I have no husband ;
 “ for thou hast had five husbands, and he
 “ whom thou hast IS NOT THY HUSBAND ; in
 “ that saidst thou truly.”

The greatest part of the congregation (who were not unacquainted with the lady's adventures) were in a high titter at the new-married couple, and the lady was very near fainting away.

Sir William's usual time of going to the capital was more than advanced ; but besides the unexpected business, which the foregoing incidents had involved him in, he was attacked by a slight fit of the gout ; which was of itself sufficient to detain him in the country. Thus he remained too inactive for his situation, and indulging in too much security, when he was alarmed by the arrival of a special messenger from London, who brought him letters to the following effect ; That on Monday the 5th day of February, two learned council had moved the court of K——'s B—— for an information to be granted against Sir William Worthy, Bart. John Coupler, Clerk, and Anne his wife, and

and Lieut. Richard Worthy, for certain TRESPASSES, CONTEMPTS, CONSPIRACIES, and MISDEMEANORS, entered into with a view to force Anne the wife of John Rover, Esq; against her will and consent to marry him the said Sir William.

To recite here the several affidavits would trespass too much on the reader's patience: let it suffice that that of our Matron contained a most artful perversion of every circumstance in the foregoing narrative, to serve her present purpose. To shew her uncommon talents this way, we shall give a short abstract of her affidavit; and shall produce that passage at large which relates to the hysteric fit mentioned above in page 141.

She

She begins with setting forth,
 “ That early in the preceding summer Sir William had made overtures for her acquaintance, and at length had declared a violent passion for her, which she had rejected with scorn : That Mr. and Mrs. Coupler had used all possible means to persuade her to a compliance, but without effect : ’Till Wen’sday the 26th of August; when being informed that Sir William had sent for her servant, and taken the liberty to question him about her character, she thought herself obliged to go to Mr. Coupler’s house to enquire the reason of it; he having been present.”

Here she puts several oaths into the poor parson’s mouth, and presents

presents him, as telling her, that
 “ it was a damned odd infamous affair:” but that, “ upon his soul, Sir William loved her dearly, and had done this only to clear her character: he was certain, however, that it would make a great noise in the neighbourhood, and therefore would advise her to marry Sir William, as the only means to silence the same.”

She describes herself as rejecting this proposal with the greatest disdain, and declaring that she would not marry Sir William, tho’ the whole world depended on it — “ she
 “ being then married to John
 “ Rover, Esq; though her marriage
 “ was kept secret for particular
 “ reasons.”

Her

Her affidavit then proceeds to set
 forth, " That the said John Cou-
 pler and his wife greatly pressed
 her to stay and dine with them
 that day — and Mrs. Coupler
 told her, that if she would
 stay, she would send for her
 cloaths, that she might dress
 herself there : — the Deponent
 being then in her morning
 dress. — That not in the least
 suspecting the design that was
 hatching against her, she ac-
 cepted their offer. — That soon
 after dinner Deponent went up
 stairs to dress herself, her cloaths
 being come.—And while she was
 dressing, Mrs. Coupler came into
 the room, and told her she was
 afraid she was cold, for there
 " was

“ was scarce any fire. Deponent

“ answered, She was not over warm.

“ Upon which Mrs. Coupler left

“ the room, and came in again

“ with a glass of liquor in her

“ hand, which she pretended was

“ wine, pressing her to drink it:—

“ That overcome by her importu-

“ nities, she did drink the same,

“ and immediately afterwards went

“ down into the parlour.

“ That in about fifteen minutes

“ after drinking the said liquor,

“ she (Deponent) was taken sud-

“ denly very sick, with a great

“ trembling all over her; of which

“ she complained to Mrs. Coupler,

“ who made her no answer, but

“ left the room.—

“ That

“ That the Deponent then saw
 “ Sir William enter the same; and
 “ immediately afterwards became
 “ totally insensible, so that she re-
 “ members nothing more, and
 “ knows not how long she re-
 “ mained in that condition:—But
 “ that when she came to herself,
 “ she saw Sir William, Mr. Cou-
 “ pler, and his wife standing by
 “ her, the said Coupler having
 “ a book in his hand: Who asked
 “ Deponent, How she could fall
 “ into such a fit, when it was her
 “ own desire, as well as Sir Wil-
 “ liam’s, to be married?—At which
 “ being greatly alarmed and asto-
 “ nished, she asked him what he
 “ meant? He answered, What
 “ should I mean, but that you were
 “ married

“ married to Sir William this af-
 “ ternoon just before you were taken
 “ so ill?—To which she replied, I
 “ believe you are mad, or you
 “ would not talk so.—And Sir
 “ William then said, He won-
 “ dered Deponent could forget she
 “ was married.——Upon which
 “ she said, I never was married to
 “ Sir William, nor ever will.——

——“ The said Coupler then told
 “ her, that to make such a noise
 “ was to no purpose, for Sir William
 “ was determined to take Deponent
 “ to his house that night, unless she
 “ would sign a paper he had in his
 “ hand, which he said consisted
 “ only of her promising never to
 “ relate what had passed; Sir Wil-
 “ liam swearing at the same time by.

“ all

“ all that was sacred, if she did not
 “ sign the paper, he would imme-
 “ diately take her to his own
 “ house: So that what with the
 “ fright they had put her in, and
 “ the illness which the liquor oc-
 “ casioned, and seeing no other
 “ way to escape from them, she
 “ was obliged and did sign the
 “ said paper *, without reading or
 “ hearing the same read over, or

* Here the reader is to note, that the deed
 by which Mrs. Wiley made a release of dower,
 had been originally dated August 22d, on
 which day it was to have been executed; but
 when it came to be used, Sir William erased
 the name of the month, and inserted the word
 September in its stead. A circumstance of
 which she was resolved to make a proper ad-
 vantage.

N “ knowing

“ knowing what were the contents
 “ thereof.”

The affidavit then proceeds to set forth “ how ill she was after she got home ; and how Sir William, and his agents, Mr. and Mrs. Coupler, repeatedly endeavoured to prevail on her to acknowledge the marriage ; till finding they gained no ground, and she still persisted in her refusal, they seemed to relent and give up their pretensions : “ That under promise of delivering up the paper which she had ignorantly signed, they had once more inveigled her to the parsonage, which was on the famous 23d of September : that by the interruption of company she had been prevented from going away till evening, when Sir William offered to carry her

home in his coach : an offer which she accepted, believing he had given up his infamous designs. " That the next morning it being reported she had been married the preceding evening, she sent several persons to know the truth of the report ; to whom Sir William and Mr. Coupler had denied the truth of it. But that afterwards they asserted she was so married, and gave her continual disturbance on that account, till she found herself obliged to send her own woman to inform her husband John Rover of the same ; upon which he immediately sent for her home to him, and received her publicly as his wife."

This affidavit of our matron was confirmed by those of Mr. Rover,
of

of her man and maid, and of many other persons; some of which were true; others of them suborned and false.

Here is a scene of glorious mischief! Ruin is strongly marked in every line! What can the parties accused bring in their defence against this horrible attack! Why nothing—but TRUTH, supported by their own fair characters! And indeed in the worst of dangers there needs no other helmet.

In the following term the defendants gave in affidavits on their part, supported by such concurrent evidence, that after a hearing of three days, the judges were unanimous in their opinion, that the whole design of the lady's affidavit and of the
rest

rest on that side, was to deceive the court: that those falsehoods had been opposed by facts that could not lie: that the marriage of Sir William had been fully proved; and that there was no doubt of its having been solemnized by her free consent; by which the whole complaint fell to the ground; and ought * not only to be discharged, but discharged with costs.

Upon this defeat, all those who were any ways aiding and abetting in that iniquitous design began to tremble; and the foremost in that list was the Rev. Mr. Credule, who very soon began to experience that

* In the lawyers phrase it is, "The rule of court, ought not only to be discharged, but" &c.

remorse which every good mind must feel for having been seduced to commit a bad action.

A report of this soon came to his diocesan, a very worthy prelate, who called to see him. At the sight of his lordship he fell on his knees to implore forgiveness of his crime; declared from what motives he had been drawn in to commit it; protested that as oft as he had recommended to Mr. Rover to accommodate matters, he had been rebuked by him and his attorney; that the latter had prevented him from declaring the truth before; and had even offered him money to go aside, when he should be called upon to give his evidence; and that he should long since have discovered the true time of the

marriage, but for this honest and virtuous lawyer.

As soon as the now truly Reverend Mr. Credule had made this discovery, a messenger was dispatched to Mr. Rover, who was then in the neighbourhood, to give him account of it. This so alarmed him that he immediately fled his country and became an exile in France, where we shall leave him surrounded with all the horrors of a guilty mind.

When the lady received the same information, she privately sent for her children and absconded, leaving her name to disgrace and infamy. Sir William immediately commenced a prosecution in the spiritual court for a divorce *à mensâ et thoro*.

As for poor Credule, who before this accident bore the character of a worthy man, and afterwards made all the atonement in his power, it is with concern we mention, that he never more stirred out of his chamber, but soon after died of a broken heart. Such are the severe reflections of a delicate mind, when filled with shame, and wounded with the stings of self-conviction!

With regard to honest Mr. Hang-up the attorney, the chief adviser and promoter of this villainous prosecution, we are sorry to inform the reader, that he has not yet been rewarded with what he so richly deserved, **A HALTER.**

T H E

THE
TURKISH MATRON.
A FRAGMENT.

O

THE
TORKISH MATRON.



THE
TORKISH MATRON.
BY
J. H. STODOLSKY.
LONDON:
PUBLISHED BY
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THE
TURKISH MATRON.

A FRAGMENT; from a MS. copy.

Prefixed to the MS. is the
following EPISTLE.

FRIEND,
I F thou art not one of those,
who think none but odd fel-
lows pore over oriental manu-
scripts, and that the matter contain'd
in the said manuscripts is to the full

as odd as those who study it, thou wilt not perhaps be displeased with the following fragment, which was transmitted to me from France, as a great curiosity, by a member of the academy royal.

Thou must however accept the translation on the same terms that I did the original, which is in Arabic; that is to say, without a key to the characters or facts it treats of; history not affording us the least assistance to guess at either. It begins abruptly after the following manner.

The

The HISTORY.

*** **T**HE principal point
the vizier had in
view was to perpe-
tuate his power. ***

There was yet about the sultan
one man of the race of Ali Ebn
Azra, who hated the vizier as much
as he loved his sovereign, who seem-
ed to be left as an example to the
great of all the virtues they ought
to imitate. Fond of fame, but
more of virtue; loyal, but not for
reward; free in the delivery of
truth, but gentle in the manner of

doing it; modest in defending himself, but resolute in the defence of others; not void of human frailties, but not too proud to acknowledge them; incapable of flattery, though it were to oblige the woman he loved, or to temporize with the prince he revered; of such exemplary honour, that no consideration, though of life itself, was of any weight in the scale against it: in a word, he so steadily opposed all those measures he could not approve, that, till he was removed, the vizier never thought himself safe.

Nor was this apprehension of his without foundation; for when he had left the sultan self-satisfied as a god, believing all his affairs to be
in

in the most flourishing state; his government established, his people happy, his enemies submissive, and his glory at the full height; the plain-dealing Achmet from time to time broke the bubble with a single blast, and manifested to him, that when the waters are covered with the most froth, they are ever the most troubled.

To rid the court of this dangerous nuisance was now become the vizier's favourite point; and in order thereto many a pathetic remonstrance, many a warm complaint, and many a specious pretence did he urge to the sultan: but so clear was Achmet's innocence, so acknowledged his virtue, that all his artifices recoiled upon himself; and he

half trembled for fear what he projected for the ruin of his enemy, should hasten his own.

It happened, at length, that certain of the sultan's allies, taking advantage of the flaws in his vizier's administration, invaded his frontiers, plundered his towns, and led his subjects into captivity: provoked with which indignities, all the nations under his command, as with one voice, importuned the prince for vengeance, and to be led forth in arms against the enemy. But so unwilling was the vizier to part with any of the public treasure for these noble purposes; so conscious of his inability to conduct a war, and so fearful that new demands on the people would occasion

sion an inquiry into the application of the vast sums already received ; that he staved off the rupture for several years ; vainly soliciting the mercy of the enemy on one hand, and artfully promising his fellow-subjects redress on the other.

But notwithstanding his fair promises, no symptom of any such thing appearing, and the tempers of the people, by a long series of injuries, being worked up to a dangerous ferment ; Achmet, as usual, took advantage of the crisis to lay the whole truth before the sultan : who, astonished to find that his subjects had so deeply suffered, that his own honour had so long been at stake, and that so little dependance was to be placed on the trifling negotiations

gotiations of his vizier, not only resolved that very instant to declare war, but offered to nominate to the chief command whatever general his faithful Achmet thought proper to recommend.

Achmet did not fail to improve the opportunity; and having paused a few minutes, Lord of my life, said he, there is a soldier long since laid aside by the vizier for speaking as a soldier should, TRUTH; and denied the preferment due to his valour and virtue; I mean Osmyn the aga: there never yet was any danger which he durst not face; nor fraud that he would not detect; nor vice that he would not oppose. His sword is his advocate; his services bear witness of his worth; and

and the records of our scribes will be his memorial. He, were I worthy to advise, should go forth as thy shadow to chastise licentiousness, restore discipline, awaken valour, atchieve glory, and reward desert. Thy slaves will find him now in the field toiling with his own victorious hands, thoughtless of ambition, but disposed to receive thy sublime behests with a veneration next to that he offers up to heaven.

Be it so, replied the sultan; he is my elect: let him know I commit both my glory and my vengeance to his charge: but lay thy hand on thy mouth, Achmet; this resolution I challenge as my own, nor will I permit my vizier to oppose

pose it; as therefore thou regardest thy own honour, or my friendship, keep the secret inviolably. This Achmet did not fail to promise with the utmost earnestness; and withdrew; transported with his commission, not so much because it was a proof of his credit and power with his lord, as that the brave Osmyn would at last find himself in a capacity to employ his great abilities to avenge the insults so long offered to his country.

It was the policy of the vizier to surround his master with his spies, in which he was so successful, that the sultan had no retirement so secret, but his intelligence found him out; nor was any corner of his seraglio so sacred, but his emissaries had

had means to make themselves acquainted with all that was transacted there. He had even bribed the reigning sultana into his interest, and furnished her with instructions, which she was often to practise in the very moment when love and fondness rendered her influence most irresistible.

It is no wonder therefore, that he was instantly informed of this cabinet conference between the sultan and Achmet, and of the apparent satisfaction which was visible in the eyes of the last when he took his leave. But though he received intimation of the conference, he remained in total ignorance as to the subject matter on which it turned: not a whisper had been heard, nor a syllable had been dropped, nor a hint

hint had escaped ; all was dark and impenetrable as midnight. The vizier felt all the tortures of the rack till he had discovered the secret, in which he met with almost insurmountable difficulties, since the sultana herself was not only left in the dark, but when she tried her usual arts, flatteries, endearments, resentments, fullennesses, tears, faintings, to worm out the truth, had the mortification to meet with nothing but downright refusals, attended with frowns and rebukes.

A prince is to his own court what the sun is to the firmament ; if he shines, every object is gilded ; if clouded, all is gloomy. The resentment of the sultan, the vexation of his fair favourite, and the apprehen-

sions

sions of the vizier, had given an air of distraction to almost every face; nor could the dullest observer be long at a loss to guess the cause.

There was then at court a young man named Ibrahim, who had endeared himself to the vizier by manifesting a genius for intrigue scarce inferior to his own; and who had besides made it appear, that he was intirely at his devotion. To him did the vizier pour forth his discontent, rather to unbosom, than with any hope of having it removed; and was therefore astonished to hear him on the contrary undertake, without the least hesitation, to surmount all obstacles, and procure him a speedy relief, at the peril of his head.

My

My lord, said he, I am but just returned from visiting Fatima, the illustrious widow of Kara Ebn Ishmael; she loves Achmet, and is tenderly beloved by him. As chance made him acquainted with her beauties in the life of her late lord, she has permitted him to see her unveiled ever since his death: besides, their nuptials being near at hand, she makes no secret of her passion for him; and as Achmet, since this secret conference with the sultan, has sent letters and excuses, when he was expected in person, she has expressed her chagrin for the disappointment openly. An incident of this nature happened while I was present, and I could easily perceive, that her resentment was not without some

some mixture of the wormwood of jealousy : from which slight hint, my lord, expect to have all your wishes answered.

Ibrahim then took his leave of the vizier and returned to Fatima, whom he found dispatching a billet to Achmet to insist on his immediate presence, in order to clear up his late unprecedented behaviour. Fair lady, said he entering, if your thoughts are upon your absent lover, or you are disposed to command his attendance, your messenger must be dispatched to the house of Osmyr the aga : the hours he should enjoy with you, he wastes there. I saw him this moment slip in at the postern, as one who cared not to be discovered : and though it is probable

P

his

his visits are innocent, it is possible they may be otherwise. If the family of Osmyr are above solicitation, or if the remembrance of your superior attractions secures him from any lasting infidelity, it is possible he may for a moment forget himself in the arms of some bewitching slave, whom he may intend to part with as cheaply as he won. I say, it is possible that even Achmet for a moment may be thus seduced; and it is necessary you should be delivered from the suspicion. Oblige him then to lay open the secret of these mysterious visits to the bottom: it is a satisfaction you may demand of him, and which he cannot refuse.

Fatima lent a greedy ear to this advice; it favoured the passion that
 was

was then uppermost in her heart, and which she was resolved at all hazards to indulge. Glad therefore that she received some intelligence on which to ground her suspicions, she waited with ungovernable impatience for the arrival of Achmet, which happened almost the moment Ibrahim took his leave; and they were no sooner alone, but she opened her whole heart, and that in the imperious stile of provoked beauty, conscious it may command, and resolute to be obeyed.

Achmet was thunderstruck with this unexpected trial; but nevertheless defended himself like a man of sense, spirit, and honour: first by witty evasions, raillery, and humour; then by general assertions of his innocence,

cence, and the most ardent expressions of unfeigned affection and unalterable fidelity. But all this proving but oil to the fire, and Fatima still insisting peremptorily on being satisfied to the minutest point, he then urged, that what she was so curious to know, was a state secret communicated under the seal of the cabinet; remonstrated the sultan's particular command, and that his own honour was pledged for his obedience and integrity.

And what, says she, my Lord? do I deserve to be made your wife, and not to be trusted with what every court-spy will be master of to-morrow, as well as you?—No, no; this is a poor thin pretence to evade the truth and put a stop to my inquiries.

quiries. But I am not so easily deceived : and either resolve to comply, or to see me no more. At these words she rose hastily from her sofa, and made towards the door with such an air, as left no room to doubt she was in earnest.

This was a sight the infatuated Achmet could not bear : he followed her with precipitation, hung upon her robe, and having in a manner forced her back to the sofa, gazed upon her for some minutes in profound silence ; during which time his heart was torn with agonies inexpressible.

At last love gained the ascendancy, and Fatima's triumph was complete. Achmet poured the fatal secret into the bosom of his beloved ; made a
merit

merit of the confidence he had placed in her ; and only conjured her not to forget, that he had intrusted her both with his life and honour. Fatima on the other hand was so overjoyed with her conquest, that she tasted almost as much pleasure from her pride as her love ; and became so liberal of her acknowledgments, that Achmet had scarce power to perceive his own weakness, or regret his infidelity.

In this temper on each side they parted, and the next morning Ibrahim, who was impatient to know the success of his artifice, paid another visit to Fatima ; who received him with that peculiar air of satisfaction, which breaks out involuntarily when the bosom swells with pleasing passions, which it pants to communicate.

Ibrahim

Ibrahim instantly perceived it, and did not fail to bleed her in the right vein. It was not enough that she had carried her point, and subdued the virtue of so considerable a man as Achmet; the glory of it was still behind, and Ibrahim, she persuaded herself, for his past information had a sort of right to participate in the success: he needed then only to open the channel and the stream flowed. The dreaded, coveted, mischievous secret could now be detained no longer, and it was hard to determine whether the hearer or relator enjoyed it most.

Ibrahim having now carried his darling point; made his visit as short as possible, and posted to the vizier, who gave him instant audience, and

greedily devoured his news. Ibrahim (said he, his eyes sparkling with joy) thou hast made me happy; I shall now triumph over this fellow and his virtue: the empire will henceforth be wholly at my mercy, and thou shalt command thy own reward.

He then made the best of his way to the seraglio, and being admitted to the sultan; May the days of my Lord, said he, endure as long as the sun, and may his glory be eternal! Here are the seals of thy sublime authority, with the custody of which thou hast so long honoured thy slave: permit me now to resign them at thy footstool, and let the short residue of a life worn out in thy service, be spent in prayers for thy perpetual felicity.

licity. Thou hast thought proper to withdraw thy confidence from me, withdraw also thy power: Achmet has thy heart, let him also wield thy sceptre. But let me beseech thy sublime highness not to trust him too far; the secrets of thy empire are too mighty for him; even the intentions of thy goodness in favour of Osmyn the aga have already escaped him; they are become the talk of the soldiery, and the very merchants canvass the consequences over their *kopba*. I speak this from a heart full of zeal for thy service; not in envy of Achmet's destined greatness.

All this while the sultan discovered the highest astonishment, mixt with concern and indignation; and when the vizier had ended, remained for a
while

while in a profound silence; after which, like one who from a state of perplexity had brought his reflections to an issue; Withdraw, said he to the vizier; before the sun sets, thou shalt know my pleasure. The vizier with a profound reverence obeyed, and the sultan immediately dispatched one of his pages to order Achmet to come into his presence that moment.

Achmet was then at the feet of his charming widow, dissolved in raptures for her having in acknowledgment of his late sacrifice consented that the morrow should be their wedding-day: but, on receiving the sultan's command, took as he thought a short farewell, and hastened to obey it. Being come to the sevaglio he found
the

the sultan alone; who thus signified his pleasure.

The vizier is thy enemy, Achmet; I therefore am not prone to give him credit, when he brings complaints against thee; nor could prevail on myself to condemn thee without a hearing. I asked thy advice preferably to his, and followed it; but enjoined thee not to let the secret escape thee. He says thou hast, and adds such particulars, as would stagger any man less attached to thee than I. Is it true? I will be determin'd by thy own voice, for I am confident thou canst not lye.

Achmet, covered with confusion, stood silent.—My friend, continued the sultan; do not give me the pain of doubting a moment.—O Fatima! cried

cried out the unfortunate Achmet, and fainted away ; but soon recovering himself, and being out of countenance at his want of firmness, when he needed it so much, recollected all that was brave about him, and then went on.

Lord of my life, I will not pretend to extenuate what can neither be concealed nor excused : I have trusted a woman with my honour, who, it appears, had none of her own. The secret is out, and I am undone.—Another pause of silence ensued.—The sultan looked to be the image of sorrow, and Achmet of despair.

At last the sultan closed the scene with these words : Achmet, I am not only sorry for thee, but thy whole kind.

kind. Since thou hast deceived me, I have lost all confidence in man: the Aga Osmyn I will however employ on thy recommendation; since I am well persuaded his virtues deserve it; nor will I ever shock him with the remembrance of thy indiscretion. Adieu, Achmet, we have each of us lost a friend, which neither of us ever can regain!

At these words the monarch rose, and Achmet having kissed the hem of his robe, left his presence in a situation of mind to be imagined, perhaps not to be described: when he was got home he threw himself on the first sofa he met with, stunned with the misfortune that had befallen him, and for the present incapable of reflection. His servants spread the table, and
he

he sat down to it as usual, but with the mien of one who slept with his eyes open; in the possession, but without the use, of his senses.

In this dreadful manner he passed the rest of the day, and when night came on, it brought with it neither comfort nor repose. With the dawn his intellectual faculties returned. The promise he had so long solicited, and which he had received with such raptures from Fatima, rushed into his mind, and rousing him from his trance, at once displayed before his view a scene of wretchedness, that seemed to have neither bound nor end. What was before his paradise, was now become his hell: both Fatima and himself he considered as fallen angels, whom grace could not reach,

reach, whom penitence could not save. He had forfeited his honour, she had betrayed her love: to think of her was horror; to be wedded to her was madness. In his own heart no resource of comfort was left. It was an empty useless casket, from whence the twin jewels, honour and content, were stolen.

Such was the deplorable situation of the unfortunate Achmet: while Fatima, on the other hand, had slept like the favourite of providence in the very arms of tranquillity, and saluted the morning, when she rose, as the harbinger of happiness. Love and Achmet took up all her thoughts; she dressed, she laughed, she summoned her friends to share in her good fortune: she thought
the

the moments, instead of being winged, had leaden feet, and wantonly chid them to make more haste away.

The appointed hour at last arrived : the circle was formed all bright, all beautiful. The bride in the midst distinguished like the morning star by superior lustre. Nothing was now wanting but Achmet ; and every hasty footstep seemed to promise his arrival. But behold, in his stead, when expectation was almost sick with longing, a messenger enters, and who having presented a billet to Fatima, vanished in such haste, as seemed to indicate an answer was no part of his commission.

At this unexpected incident the bride's countenance fell at once : her
breast

breast heaved: her colour went and came: her hand trembled: a cold sweat stood upon her brow: and having with her eye run hastily over the fatal letter, she gave a loud shriek and fainted away. The gaiety of the nuptial scene was now wholly lost in a general confusion: part of the bride's fair friends received her in their arms, and used their best endeavours to recall her wandering spirits; while the rest, with irresistible curiosity, examined the lines which had power to effect so sudden and so sad a change.

ACHMET to FATIMA.

“ O FATIMA! Thou hast ruined the man who adored thee: I trusted thee with my honour, and thou hast betrayed it to my enemy. Of trea-

Q

chery

chery however I do not accuse thee ; but if frailty implies guilt, thou hast even more to answer for than I : for hadst not thou tempted, I had not fallen.—Thee I forgive : myself I never can ; and for fear I should, am resolved to look on the eyes of my undoer no more.—Adieu, Fatima ! before this is presented to thee, I shall be numbered with those that have been.”

The moment this was read, the house rung with lamentations, and messengers were dispatched at full speed to prevent, if possible, such a miserable catastrophe : impossible indeed it proved : dead they found him on a sofa, with a smile on his countenance, as if to signify that his transgression was now atoned for *****

T H E

THE
ROMAN MATRON.

From an ancient STORY-BOOK.

Q3

ROMAN MASONRY



THE
ROMAN MATRON.

From the old story-book, intituled,
The seven wise Masters of Rome *.

Courtly Reader,

DO not too fastidiously reject the following tale, though it appears in the rough and homely garb of antiquity. The outlines of the picture are evidently taken from Petronius, though

* From an ancient copy in black letter.

Q 4

the

the finishing is done by a much coarser and less skilful hand. If our old-fashioned author has not been able to preserve those delicate strokes of wit and humour which fell from the gay and elegant Petronius, at least he has made some rude efforts to compensate for this defect; he has thrown in several additional incidents, with a view to heighten the catastrophe, and render the frailty of the Matron more striking and inexcusable.

After the reader had seen the Ephesian Matron so gracefully move in her Grecian robe, as dressed out by the courtly Petronius, we thought it would be a matter of curiosity, and perhaps of entertainment, to shew him the same character

character tricked out in the old English ruff and farthingale by the Gothic hand of one of our rude unpolished ancestors.

It is diverting to observe how naturally the author has fallen in with the melancholy turn of his countrymen, and humoured their propensity for dismal stories, by reducing one of the most gay and pleasant tales of antiquity to a downright bloody and tragical narrative.

The

The HISTORY.

THERE was a knighte that had a faire yonge wife, whom hee loved entirelye, soe that he could not bee out of her sighte. It happened on a time that they played together at chesse, and the knighte by chaunce had a knife in his hande, and shee fortun'd to smite her hande on the knife, soe that a littel bloud beganne to appeare. When the knighte sawe his wife bleede, hee fell to the grounde in a swounde. His wife, seeinge

seeinge that, cast colde water on his face, insomuche that he came a littel to himselfe, and sayd light-lye; Call the curate with the hollye sacrament, for I must dye; for the bloud that I have seene come from your finger hath smitten deathe to my harte. Then the priest came, and comforted him much, and administred the sacrament unto him: and anon he dyed; for whose deathe there was grete sorrowe, especiallye by his wife.

Also after the obsequies were finished, shee went and laye upon the grave, and there made grete lamentacion, and sayd, Shee would never departe thence; but as a turtle dove, she would for the love of her husbonde there abide and
 dye.

dye. Then went her friends and neighbours unto her and sayd, What availeth this for his soule, to live here weeping until you dye? It is better that you goe home and there give almes for the love of God, and that shal more availe your husbonde's soul, then in this place to abide.

To whom shee aunswered, I praye holde your peace: you are evil counsellours. Consider yee not, how I am from him separated by deathe for a littel blond hee sawe come out of my finger, therefore I shal never from hence departe. Her friends hearing that, made her a littel house nighe unto the grave; and putting therein all thinges necessarye, went away, thinking
within

within a while shee should be wea-
rye to bee alone and so desolate
from all companye, and therebye
desire againe the companye of the
people.

In the cittye was then a lawe,
that if an offender against the lawe
were hanged, the sheriffe all night
should watche the dead bodye
armed; and if it happened that
the bodye hanged were stolne, the
sheriffe should lose all his landes
and his life at the kinge's pleasure.
It happened soone after the knight
was dead, that a man should be
hanged for trespassinge, so that the
sheriffe all that nighte watched by
the gallowes not farre from the cit-
tye; and the churche-yard was not
farre from the same.

Then

Then beganne the sheriffe to bee
 soe colde, that hee could not possi-
 blye endure it, but was even readye
 to dye except hee mighte speedilye
 warme him, it was so extreme colde
 and soe grete a frost. And by
 chaunce espyinge a fire in the
 churche-yard, hee hasted and came
 thereto, and when hee was come
 near to it, hee knocked at the littel
 house. The woman sayd; Who at
 this time knocketh at the house of
 the sorrowfulle woman? Hee aun-
 swered; I am the sheriffe, that
 hath endured much colde and am
 readye to freeze to deathe, unless
 without delaye you lette me warme
 myselfe. Shee sayd unto him, I feare
 that if I lette you in, yee should
 cause mee to bee more heavy. Hee
 sayd,

sayd, I promise you that I shall saye
noe words to your displeasure.

Then shee lette him in, and when
hee had sitten a while by the fire,
and was well warmed, hee sayd unto
her ; O faire woman, with your
licence would I faine speake but one
worde with you. Shee aunswered,
Sir, saye what pleasest you. Then
hee sayd, O ladye, you bee a faire
gentlewoman rich and yonge ; were
it not more convenient for you to
dwelle at home and to give almes,
then to waste yourselfe here with
weepinge. Shee sayd, Sir knighte,
had I knowen this before, you had
not come in ; for I saye to you, as
I have sayd to others oftentimes, you
knowe my husbonde loved mee soe
welle, that for a littel blood hee
sawe

sawe mee bleede out of my finger,
 hee is dead; wherefore I will dye
 for the love of him.

When as the knight hearde this,
 hee tooke leave and went againe unto
 the gallowes, and when hee was
 come thither, and sawe that the
 thiefe whom hee lefte there hanginge
 was stolne awaye, hee beganne to waxe
 heavye; and sayd, Woe is mee! what
 shall I doe! for I have losse my
 life and all my goodes. And goinge
 up and downe thus full of sorrowe,
 hee knewe not what waye to turne
 himselfe. At last hee concluded to
 goe to the desolate ladye and showe
 her the heaviness of his harte, to
 wit * if she could give him any good
 counsaile.

* i. e. know.

When

When hee was come thither, hee called, and shee asked him the cause. And hee sayd, Madam, I am the sheriffe that was righte nowe with you, and I would faine shewe you the secrettes of my harte, therefore I praye you open the dore. And hee went in, and sayd unto her; O most vertuous ladye, I am nowe come to have your advice, for you know the lawes of the lande are, that when any man is hanged, and stolne off the gallowes, the sheriffe's life and goodes are in the kinge's hands: nowe it happened while I was here and warmed mee, the thiefe's bodye was stolne, therefore I praye, faire ladye, for the love of God give mee your best advice what to doe. Shee aunswered, I have compassion upon

R

you,

you, for by the lawe you have lost your life and goodes to the king: doe nowe after my counsaile and yee shall loose neither. He answered, I am to you gretelye bounden, hoping to have good comforte. Shee sayd, Will you then promise to make mee your wife? The knight answered, Would God you were indeed so minded! but I feare you disdain to humble yourself unto soe pore a knight. Shee sayd, I give you my wille thereto. And hee gave her againe his wille, and consented to bee her knight during his life.

Then sayd shee, Yee knowe such a daye my lord was buried, which for the love of mee dyed; take him out of the sepulcher and hange him up instede of the thiefe.

The

The knighte aunswered; Ladye, your counsayle is very good. Then went they and opened the sepulcher and drewe him out. The knighte sayd unto the ladye, Howe shall wee now doe, because ere the thiefe was hanged, two of his teethe were smitten out, and I fear mee if that were perceived I shall dye the deathe. Then the ladye sayd, Take a stone and strike out two of his teethe. The knighte aunswered, Madam, that maye not I doe, for while hee lived hee was my trustye friende, and it should bee to mee grete rebuke to doe soe disloyall a deede to his bodye being dead. Shee aunswered, For your love I shall doe it; and presently tooke a stone and smote out two of his teethe.

R 2

Then

Then shee sayd to the sheriffe,
 Take him and hange him upon
 the gallowes like the thiefe. The
 knighte sayd, I feare to do it, for
 the thiefe in takinge was wounded
 upon his head, and he lacked his eares.
 Then the ladye sayd, Take a sworde
 and smite off his eares. The knighte
 aunswered, O, madam, God forbid
 that I doe soe to the dead bodye
 of him whom I loved soe well in
 his life! Then sayd shee, Give mee
 your sworde and I shall for your
 love doe it: And soe tooke the
 sworde and smote a manlye stroke on
 the dead man's foreheade, and cutte
 off his eares.

And when shee had thus done,
 shee sayd, Nowe hange him. Then
 the knighte aunswered, Yett I feare
 to

to hange him, for the thiefe wanted both his *thumbes* *, and if hee bee searched and not found without, all my labor is losfe. Then sayd shee, I never saw man soe fearfulle, seeinge the matter is sure: Take a knife and cut away his *thumbes*. And hee aunswered; That I maye not doe in any wise, and therefore I praye you spare me, for you knowe what a man is without his *thumbes*. Shee said, For the love of you I shall doe it. Then shee tooke the
knife

* Gentle Reader, in the ancient copy from whence this old story is printed, the word that should have come in above, was unfortunately every where erased. Whether we have recovered the true reading is left to the sagacity of *Messieurs* the Critics, who are at liberty to substitute any other word they think more proper.

knife and cutte awaye her husbonde's *thumbes*; and sayd, Nowe take the churle thus disfigured and hange him up withouten dreade. And they went bothe and hunge the bodye upon the gallowes, and soe was the sheriffe delivered.

Then said the ladye, Now yee bee delivered from all dangers by my counsayle; therefore I desire you according to your promise that yee wedde mee. The knighte sayd, I have made a vowe, that I shall never wedde other so long as I live; the whiche I shall performe. Then hee sayd, O thou moste shamefulle and worste of all women! who would take thee to wife? An honourable and lovinge knighte was thy husbonde, who
for

for a littel bloud, that he sawe issue
 out of thy finger, dyed. Now hast
 thou smitten out two of his teethe;
 cutte off his eares and *thumbes*; and
 made a grete wound in his head;
 what devil would marry thee? there-
 fore thou shalt never shame good
 man more: I will rid thee of thy
 life. And so hee drewe his sworde,
 and with one stroke smote off her
 heade.

O TRAGICAL!

F I N I S.

Tu historiam aut fabulam, quod re-
fert PETRONIUS, pro libitu appel-
labis. Ita tamen ex facto accidisse
EPHESI, & FLAVIANUS auctor est.
Mulieremque tradit impietatis suæ, &
sceleris parricidalis & adulterii poenas
luisse.

JO. SARISBURIENSIS.

5 AP 58

Historia septem Septimorum
Roma, 4^{to}. 1490. B. 5. 21.
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